KITCHEN SINK COMIX

$3.50
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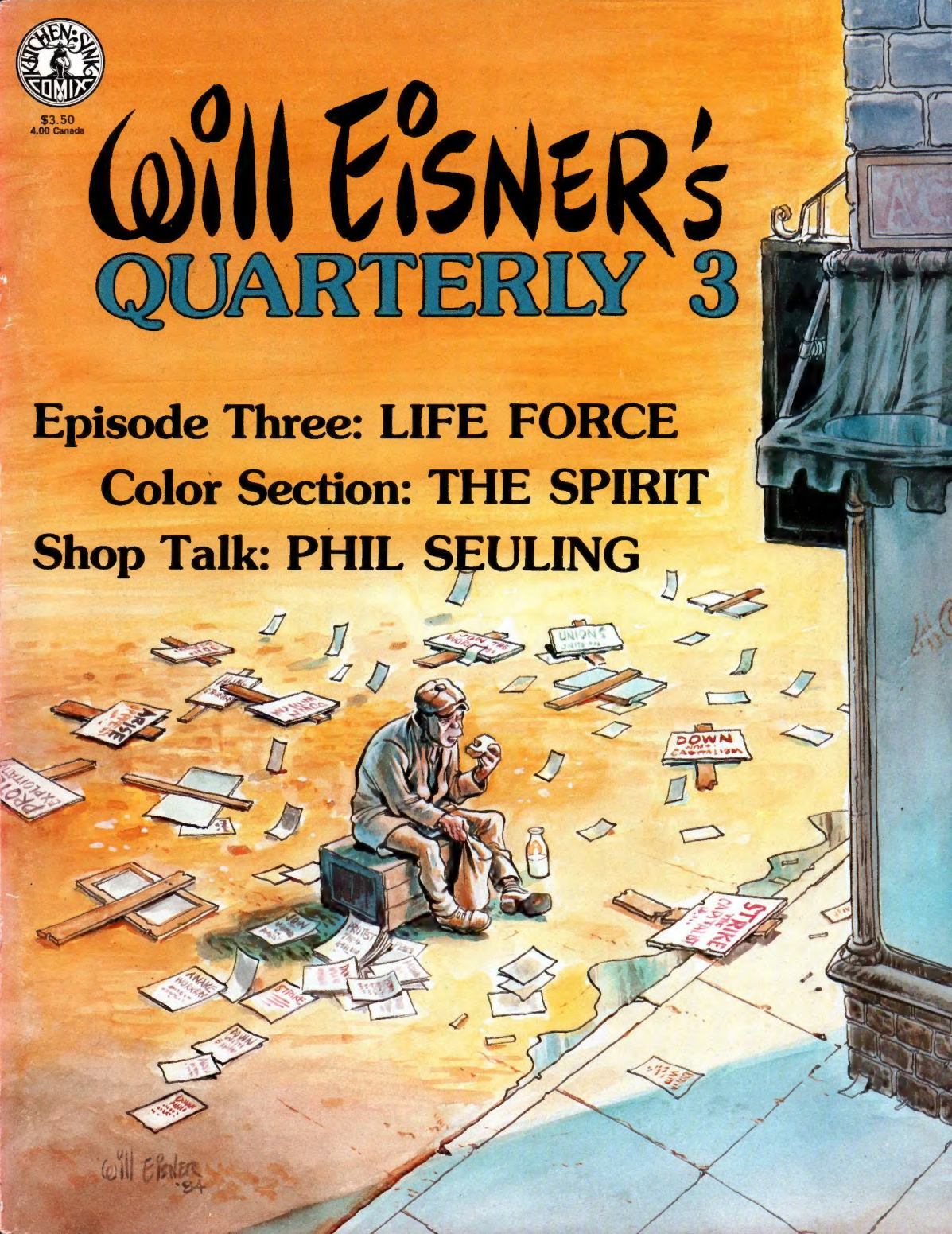
# Will Eisner's QUARTERLY 3

## Episode Three: LIFE FORCE

## Color Section: THE SPIRIT

## Shop Talk: PHIL SEULING



As this issue was at press, we received word of Phil Seuling's untimely death...

# Phil Seuling, 1934-84

Today I learned that Phil Seuling had passed away!

It is a struggle to put into a few words what I want the world to remember about Phil. He was a giant. Big in voice, big in heart and big in accomplishment. He left us with a huge sense of indebtedness to him. A whole industry —the comic book direct market outlet— owes its origins to Phil. I owe my return to the comics field to Phil. He touched lives and he did much good. In that he was a fortunate man.

The last time I saw Phil Seuling was on the occasion of the taping of the "Shop Talk" feature for *Will Eisner's Quarterly* No.3. As always our conversation was animated and lively with laughter. I told him that I wanted this interview to be something of a testimonial to his role in the creation of what is now called the "comicon." He laughed at what he felt was an exaggeration on my part ...but he accepted the credit nonetheless.

I'm glad that I had the good fortune of knowing him and the foresight to record this last interview.

Will Eisner

The last months of 1970 were not prosperous ones for me. In September I was a founding member of two separate businesses: *The Bugle-American*, an alternative newspaper based in Madison, and Krupp Comic Works (Kitchen Sink Press), a comic book company headquartered in my Milwaukee apartment. But both companies were undercapitalized and the staffs unpaid and as Christmas neared, cartoonist Jim Mitchell and I ran a couple of small ads in *The Bugle* offering our original comic strips for sale under the headline, "Save a Starving Artist."

Soon afterward we received a long package from Brooklyn in the mail. Inside was a "Coney Island Salami" with a note that read, "Never let it be said that Phil Seuling let an artist starve." We had never met Phil. He was a total stranger to us. How that ad ever reached his attention I'll never know. But that dramatic flair and generosity was a trademark of Phil Seuling, as I was to discover many times.

He invited me to his July 1971 New York Comic Art Convention. That event affected the course of my career. Not only did the excitement and sheer number of fans and dealers convince me that comics were a "real" business to pusue, but I also met Will Eisner. It was Will's first convention too. We have often reflected that Phil was the catalyst that brought both of us into the business — in Will's case, returning after a long hiatus, in my case, as a new entrepreneur.

Phil was also an early supporter of "underground" comics. Even after an incident in which he was set up and busted for selling them, he continued to distribute undergrounds, giving us our first entry into the "direct market."

Phil continued to be a generous friend over the years. With his many contacts in the field he helped locate esoteric Betty Boop and Li'l Abner items for my personal collection, sometimes selflessly tipping me off on pieces he himself desired. I frequently designed ads for Phil over the years, promoting his conventions. I've always had a hard time billing friends for such jobs, so Phil would invariably pay me in Al Capp originals.

Some convention attendees may have been intimidated by Phil's gruffness as he commandeered his lieutenants and masterminded the thousand details of every comic-con. But those close to him knew that the outward bluster, booming voice and imposing physique were only an Oz-like front for the child inside. This was a grown man who changed careers to make a living from these symbols of his youthful pleasures, who spent his last weeks adding to and enjoying his toy collection.

It is impossible to guess how many businesses he helped start, how many careers he boosted, how many fans he converted, how many personalities he affected with his enthusiasm for the field. He left a permanent mark on the comics industry he loved. More important, he left countless friends. He left us too soon. We miss him greatly.

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3... A LIFE FORCE. In this installment, Will Eisner focuses on the political storms floating around 55 Dropsie Avenue, the Bronx. Young Will, the sign painter, is torn between socialism and the security of his family, and Jacob Shtarkah is contacted by an old flame who's trying to escape Hitler's Germany.

25... SPIRIT SECTION. In a classic tale, The Spirit clashes with a clown driven mad by love. Bob Powell's Mr. Mystic returns to foil another attempt at psychic treachery by Elena.

43... SHOP TALK. Will Eisner and Phil Seuling, a pioneer in the "direct sales" market, discuss the history of comics conventions and distribution and some possible directions for the future.

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SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PENDING AT PRINCETON WI

# A Life Force

## The story thus far...

This issue contains chapters seven through nine of Will Eisner's new graphic novel, *A Life Force.* The novel follows the residents of a Bronx tenement as they struggle to survive through the Great Depression of the 1930s. The building at 55 Dropsie Avenue holds immigrants, those who are out of luck and money, and cockroaches.

The immigrants, many of them Jewish, have arrived from other, more hostile, places. Jacob Shtarkah, an aging carpenter with a bad heart, shovels snow and pleads for small building jobs and hopes to keep his family united. Although he is troubled by it, he shoves questions of meaning and immortality into the background. He takes any job —"When you're drowning, you don't ask a log floating in the water, '...how big?' " He plans to build a spare room for Rabbi Bensohn's wife, who is "not right," and asks his Italian neighbor Angelo for help.

Angelo and his wife Marie are literally under the gun. Angelo was helped into the United States by the Black Hand, a gangster fraternal order. Now he owes them a favor, which is to set up Elton Shaftsbury III, the resident ex-rich man, for a robbery.

Shaftsbury lost his fortune in the Wall Street crash of 1929. By the winter of 1933, he is selling apples on the corner of Wall and William Streets. As he contemplates suicide on the day dividing 1933 and 1934, he is asked by Rifka and Rebecca Shtarkah, Jacob's wife and daughter, to ignite the stove and lights for their Sabbath. He is paid 50 cents for being the "Shabbasgoy," but more important, the suicidal spell is broken and Elton Shaftsbury decides to go on living. He dates Rebecca, a 27-year-old schoolteacher, and he gets a runner's job for a stock broker. He delivers stocks and bonds to other brokerage houses in the city and this is what attracts the attention of the Black Hand. Angelo's wife is coerced into fingering the Shabbasgoy for a holdup.

But events don't go smoothly for the gangsters: An "enchanted prince" named Aaron enters the scene. Aaron was born with a "tiny microgap between unconnected tissue" in his brain. While he is physically strong and otherwise mentally brilliant, the imperfect "weld" leads him to a life of isolation in a dingy 55 Dropsie apartment. There he confronts his demons in long dialogues; there he talks to the God who made him this way.

One morning, the voices are quiet. Feeling at peace and strong, Aaron ventures out in the street. He comes across one of the Black Hand gangsters in an alley. The curious Aaron and the gunman tangle, and somehow, the gangster is shot. Unaware of the trap he's missed, Shaftsbury enters the tenement to have lunch with Rebecca.

Aaron retreats to a corner of his room, where he stares into space and eats his lunch.

Now... as 1934 marches on... the world's politics —communism, socialism, democracy and fascism— come to call at 55 Dropsie Avenue, the Bronx...

# FOR SALE!

# TREASURES from Will Eisner's PERSONAL ARCHIVES

**WILL EISNER IS CLEARING HIS VAULT OF AN ACCUMULATION OF DUPLICATES, SCARCE AND one-of-a-kind items. And now *you* have an opportunity to acquire items from this treasure trove *for your own collection!***

**Some of these go back to the early 50s. Some are relatively recent. Some are in perfect shape. Some are less than perfect. But most of the items share one thing in common: they are almost impossible to find.**

**INCLUDED ARE: Harvey *Spirit* No.1 and 2 in mint condition • The large Tabloid Press *Spirit* • Many copies of the Army *P*S* magazine Eisner created and produced, including the very first issue and bound volumes • Most issues of the Warren *Spirit* • The 1966 *New York Herald Tribune* Sunday Magazine with the new 5-page *Spirit* story that has never been reprinted elsewhere • Hardcover books on military hardware authored by Eisner • A wide variety of foreign editions of squarebound *Spirit* albums, *A Contract With God* and assorted magazines featuring The Spirit (many with covers and art not seen in the U.S.) in French, German, Finnish, Dutch, Spanish, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and other languages • Tennis and Golf calendars drawn by Eisner • The out-of-print hardbound *Spirit Portfolio* • The Spirit "Bag" No.4 • "Bootleg" Spirit Bag section (given away *free* to first 22 persons ordering who request it!) • Signed N.C.S. Portfolio plates • Joe Dope tearsheets • and still more! • Many items autographed! • All items available for immediate sale.**

**For a complete descriptive list of items, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to:**

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# IT'S OUT!

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Paperback edition 9.95. Deluxe hardcover signed by both artists, 25.00.

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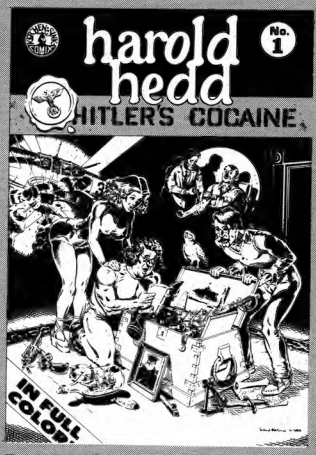


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**Features an all-new Harold Hedd adventure! Hand-cut color separations by Holmes himself! Quality paper and color throughout! No.2 follows in August! Reserve yours now!**

ANOTHER KITCHEN SINK COMIC

Coming this fall--- *MEGATON MAN!!* A full-color Baxter comic from Don Simpson that is the funniest parody of silver age comics *you'll ever see!!*

# CHAPTER 7
# THE REVOLUTIONARY

IN 1934 THE WINDS OF CHANGE
SWIRLED AROUND
55 DROPSIE AVENUE, THE BRONX.

## INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST REVOLUTION IS FORECAST

### MOSCOW MEETING PREDICTS WORLD-WIDE REVOLT AT HAND

FEB. 3, 1934

The Associated Press, in a dispatch filed today from Moscow, reported that a claim of victory for world communism was proclaimed by a Soviet party leader.

In his address to the All-Union Communist Party Congress, D.Z. Manuilsky declared, "The elements of a revolutionary crisis are growing everywhere. The forces of a proletarian revolution are increasing. Mass strikes, peasant's revolts and military rebellions . . . herald the coming revolutions. Communists in all countries have learned to fight and conquer . . . we will conquer the whole world."

## COMMUNIST LITERATURE BANNED IN N.Y. PRISON

FEB. 1, 1934

The N.Y. Times reported that Warden Lewis E. Lawes of Sing Sing Prison ordered "certain current periodicals with communist tendencies" banned from the prison.

Periodicals such as The New Masses and the Labor Defender will be forbidden. "There are some things you cannot permit where there are feeble-minded and easily influenced persons around," he said.

Actually, there are five known, admitted communists in the Ossining Prison.

## SOCIALIST PARTY MASS MEETING BROKEN UP BY COMMUNISTS

### MADISON SQUARE GARDEN RALLY IS SCENE OF WILD MELEE

FEB. 17, 1934

New York: A free-for-all, in which about 5000 communists tried to "capture" a mass meeting in Madison Square Garden, resulted in many injuries and broken chairs.

The meeting, scheduled by Socialists to protest the slaughter of Austrian Workers by Fascists, was attended by 20,000 persons and proceeded as scheduled until the communists made their way into the building and began throwing chairs, engaging in fist fights while otherwise interrupting the speakers. Clarance Hathaway, the communist leader, was finally subdued and thrown out into the street where, bleeding from the nose and face, he continued to address a crowd on the sidewalk on Forty-ninth Street.

## REVOLUTIONARY JAILED FOR PAINTING "VOTE COMMUNIST" ON BRONX STREET

OCT. 28, 1934

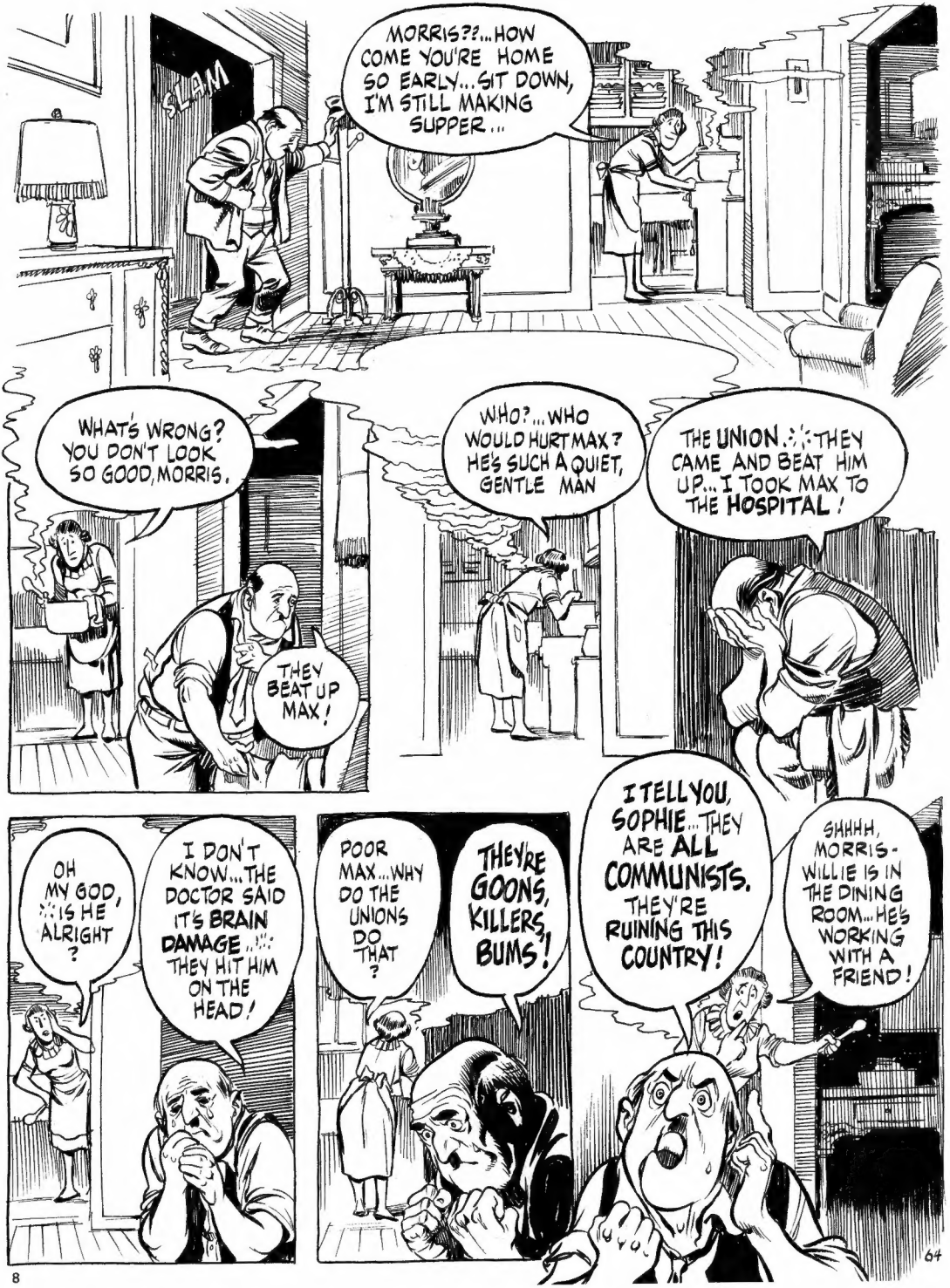
An item in the N.Y. Times of Sunday reported that a 16 year old Bronx boy was held on a disorderly conduct charge for painting "Vote Communist" on the sidewalk in front of P.S. 50, at Lyons Avenue in the Bronx. The painting was in large red letters. Since neither his political friends or his relatives posted the $25. bond, he spent the night in jail.

...THAT WAS A GOOD MEETING, WILLIE! HEY, WE NEED YOUR HELP MAKING PLACARDS AND POSTERS FOR THE MASS MEETING IN UNION SQUARE TOMORROW... HOW'S ABOUT IT!?
SURE, BEN, LET'S MEET AT MY HOUSE... AFTER SCHOOL!
...OH, BY THE WAY, FIRST WE GOT A 'CELL' MEETING IN THE BASEMENT OF YER APARTMENT HOUSE... THERE'S A SPECIAL VISITOR COMING TODAY!
OKAY, ...MEET YOU THERE, BEN!

...THIS WHERE THEY'RE HOLDING THE MEETING, WILLIE ?
YEAH,... DOWN IN THE 'SOCIAL ROOM'... THE SUPER LET US FIX UP THE CELLAR
HEY, HEY, PRETTY FANCY DOWN HERE!
WE GOT SOME OLD SOFAS FROM THE JUNK YARD!
OKAY... QUIET DOWN! LET'S START THE MEETING...
NOW, AS YOU ALREADY KNOW... WE'RE GONNA HAVE A DEMONSTRATION IN UNION SQUARE T'MORROW AT 3 PM! BEN AND WILLIE ARE MAKING THE SIGNS AND LEAFLETS!
WE'LL RUN OFF THE SHEETS ON THE MIMEO MACHINE IN SCHOOL!
NOW LET ME INTRODUCE OUR GUEST, MR. VOSTROV-HE JUST ARRIVED FROM MOSCOW... HE HAS SOME ADVICE!
...COMRADES, YOUR STRUGGLE IS NOT GOING UNNOTICED BY THE WORKERS OF THE WORLD -TRYING TO THROW OFF THE YOKE OF CAPITALISM!
... TOMORROW, WHEN YOU GO TO THE BARRICADES, REMEMBER: FIRST, THOSE OF YOU WITH BABY BROTHERS AND SISTERS BE SURE THE GIRLS ARE PUSHING THE BABY CARRIAGES UP AT THE FRONT LINE!

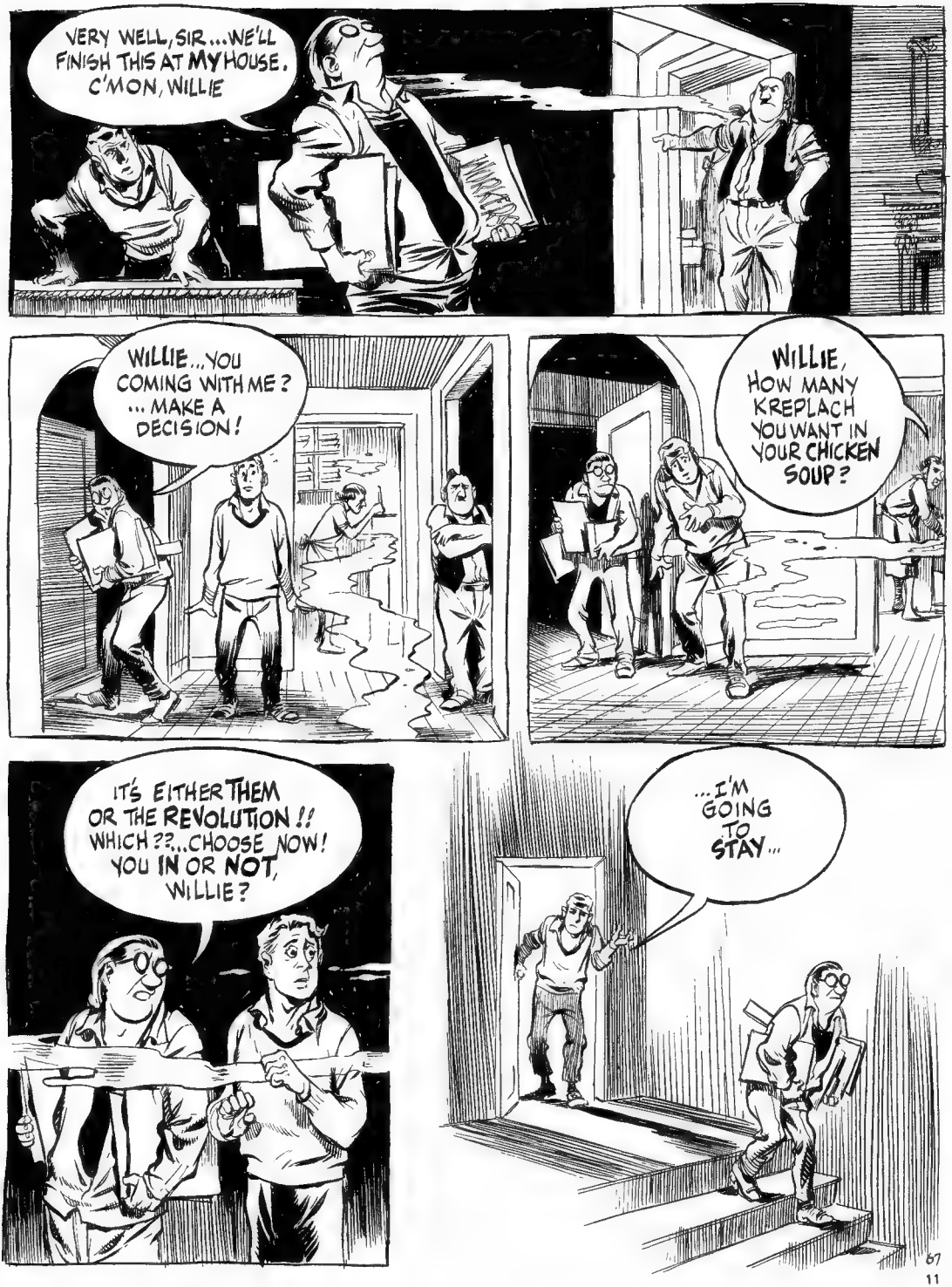
NEXT... TOWARD THE END OF THE SPEECHES - A COUPLE OF YOU ACTIVIST AGITATORS START TO PUSH FROM THE BACK! ...THROW A FEW ROCKS AT THE POLICE ...TO GET THINGS GOING!
HEY, THAT'S GONNA FORCE THE COPS INTO A FIGHT!
EXACTLY... ON THE FRONT LINE GIRLS START SCREAMING ABOUT THEIR BABIES... AND THE NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPHERS WILL GET PICTURES OF THE POLICE ATTACKING WOMEN AND CHILDREN
WOW!
I DON'T THINK MY MOTHER WILL LET ME BRING MY BABY BROTHER!
GOSH
AAAH THEY WON'T HIT KIDS
WHO'S GONNA DO THE FIGHTING?
DON'T WORRY, WE'LL HAVE A FEW MENSHEVIST PROFESSIONALS IN THE CROWD! THEY'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO!
OKAY, ANY LAST QUESTIONS BEFORE WE BREAK UP?
MR. VOSTROV, WHAT ABOUT JEWS IN THE SOVIET UNION?
UNDER COMMUNISM ALL RELIGION IS REGARDED AS A SOCIAL OPIATE... NO CLASSES, NO RELIGION ...THUS NO BIGOTRY!
THEY GOT FREE LOVE IN RUSSIA?
WHAT ABOUT FREE SPEECH?
THERE IS NO NEED FOR DIVERSIONIST DEBATE ...IN A SOCIALIST SOCIETY, THE STATE WILL PROVIDE THE GUIDANCE FOR ALL SOCIAL THOUGHT
HEY, WE GONNA NEED SIX BABY CARRIAGES
YAHOO! THE REVOLUTION BEGINS WILLIE!
OKAY... BEN, LET'S GO UP TO MY APARTMENT. WE CAN WORK THERE
62

FACTORY NO ADMITTANCE
DELUX FURS
WHAT DO YOU MEAN..YOU'RE ORGANIZING MY SHOP?!
I'M JUST A LITTLE SHOP...WE GOT ONLY THREE WORKERS AND I PAY THEM GOOD WAGES!
YOU ARE A SWEAT SHOP!
LIVING OFF WORKER SWEAT!
MAX, COME OUT HERE!
MAX IS MY FOREMAN! MAX..THEY WANT TO ORGANIZE US... AM I RUNNING A SWEAT SHOP OR NOT?
WHO NEEDS IT? WE GET THE SAME PAY AS THE UNIONS
AAAH LISSEN TO THE COMPANY FINK
GEDADA HERE YOU BUMS. WE DON'T WANTA BE UNION!
STOP SHOVIN' ME!
YOU WANNA BE A DIRTY UNION BUSTER ...SO, HERE'S SOMETHIN' TO THINK ABOUT!!
THE DELEGATE'LL BE COMIN' UP HERE ON MONDAY WITH THE UNION CONTRACT...IF YOU DON'T SIGN UP—WE'LL BE BACK TO GIVE YOU SOME MORE!
MAX... OH MY GOD... MAX!
63.


SLAM
MORRIS?!... HOW COME YOU'RE HOME SO EARLY... SIT DOWN, I'M STILL MAKING SUPPER...
WHAT'S WRONG? YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD, MORRIS.
THEY BEAT UP MAX!
WHO?... WHO WOULD HURT MAX? HE'S SUCH A QUIET, GENTLE MAN
THE UNION... THEY CAME AND BEAT HIM UP... I TOOK MAX TO THE HOSPITAL!
OH MY GOD, IS HE ALRIGHT?
I DON'T KNOW... THE DOCTOR SAID IT'S BRAIN DAMAGE... THEY HIT HIM ON THE HEAD!
POOR MAX... WHY DO THE UNIONS DO THAT?
THEY'RE GOONS, KILLERS, BUMS!
I TELL YOU, SOPHIE... THEY ARE ALL COMMUNISTS. THEY'RE RUINING THIS COUNTRY!
SHHHH, MORRIS - WILLIE IS IN THE DINING ROOM... HE'S WORKING WITH A FRIEND!
64

HEY, POPPA, WHAT'S THE MATTER ?
THE UNION BEAT UP MAX !
HE WAS OBVIOUSLY BEING AN OBSTRUCTIONIST SIR...
HEH ??
HEY, BEN... DON'T DONT..
UNIONS ARE THE HOPE OF THE WORKING CLASS IN ITS STRUGGLE TO OVERCOME OPPRESSION.
WORKERS UNITE
YOU SEE, POPPA, UNIONS ARE THE ONLY EFFECTIVE WEAPON AGAINST THE CAPITALIST EXPLOITATION. TRY TO UNDERSTAND !
...WHAT EXPLOITATION ! SO, AM I A CAPITALIST OPPRESSOR ? ? !!!
POPPA... PLEASE... HE DIDN'T MEAN YOU, EXACTLY...
65

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE ?!
WORKERS UNITE
COMMUNISTS...MY SON A COMMUNIST ORGANIZER?? OY!!
SIR, YOU ARE EXPLOITING LABOR AND AS SUCH, YOU ARE THE ENEMY!
COMMUNISTS, UNION GOONS, RADICALS!! NOT IN MY HOUSE WILL YOU PLOT REVOLUTION !!
POPPA... IT'S ONLY FOR A MASS MEETING, A DEMONSTRATION!
GET OUT OF MY HOUSE!


VERY WELL, SIR... WE'LL FINISH THIS AT MY HOUSE. C'MON, WILLIE
WILLIE... YOU COMING WITH ME? ... MAKE A DECISION!
WILLIE, HOW MANY KREPLACH YOU WANT IN YOUR CHICKEN SOUP?
IT'S EITHER THEM OR THE REVOLUTION!! WHICH??... CHOOSE NOW! YOU IN OR NOT, WILLIE?
...I'M GOING TO STAY...

# CHAPTER 8
# UPTURN

## STOCKS RISE IN RESPONSE TO U.S. DOLLAR POLICY

### STOCK MARKET IS UP AFTER CONGRESS VOTES TO REVALUE DOLLAR

JAN. 16, 1934

The financial community responded with enthusiasm on the news that Congress speeded action to support President Roosevelt's request that he be given legislation to devalue the U.S. dollar on the basis of gold reserves.

On Wall Street stocks opened strong and closed up from 1 to 7 points. Trading was more active than it had been since July 21 of last year.

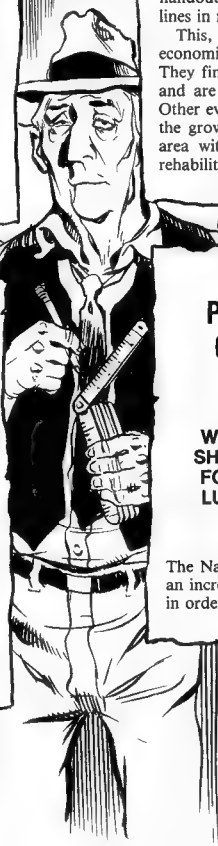
## BREADLINES FADE FROM BOWERY

### SIGN OF UPTURN IN THE ECONOMY

JAN. 14, 1934

Welfare workers familiar with the Bowery area, which had been the scene of long breadlines on which homeless and out of work men cued up for handouts, report an absence of such lines in recent weeks.

This, in their opinion, is a sign that economic conditions are on the rise. They find that men now have money and are able to care for themselves. Other evidence of the improvement is the growing number of stores in the area with many old buildings being rehabilitated.



## JOB RECOVERY REPORT CITES IMPROVEMENT WORLD WIDE

### THE UNITED STATES IS LEADING IN GAINS

JAN. 5, 1934

The International Labor office based in Geneva reported that the United States has shown a very marked rise in employment during the last months of 1933. However, unemployment in the U.S. still stood at 10,076,000.

## LUMBER PRODUCTION CONTINUES ADVANCE

### WEEK ENDING JAN. 13 SHOWS RISE OVER 1933 FOR ORDERS AND ALL LUMBER PRODUCTION

The National Lumber Assn. reported an increase in shipments due to a rise in orders over last year.

...NOW, ANGELO...SO, WE CAN PUT THE STUDS HERE... WE ONLY NEED 8 TWO-BY-FOURS
NO GOOD, JACOB, YOU GONNA NEED 12 'CAUSE Y'GOTTA HAVE 16-INCH CENTERS
Y'SEE... THE RABBI'S APARTMENT IS IN THE BACK, SO, HIS BEDROOM IS ON THE LONG SIDE...IF WE BUILD HIS EXTRA ROOM THERE, IT'S GOTTA GO THE LONG WAY..THAT MEANS 96 FOOT OF STUDDING!
OY VEY!! ANGELO... SO, BESIDES THAT THERE'S THE PLASTER AND FURRING AND TRIM...WE GOT NO CASH... WE GOTTA BUY IT ON CREDIT... FROM WHO? FROM WHO...I ASK YOU?!
LOMBARDI'S LUMBER YARD... I DID BUSINESS WITH HIM BEFORE... HE'LL HELP US!

HEY, LOMBARDI... HOW'S COME YOU LOCKED UP SO EARLY?
WE WANT TO BUY SOME LUMBER
I'M OUTTA BUSINESS, ANGELO. I'M BROKE... THE BANK'S GONNA FORECLOSE ON ME... I CAN'T SELL YOU NOTHIN'... THE BANK OWNS THIS PLACE NOW!
LOMBARDI LUMBER YARD
WAREHOUSE
OYVEY! THERE GOES OUR JOB!
THAT'S NOTHIN', FOR A FEW LOUSY BUCKS, THEY TAKE MY YARD
SO, HOW MUCH YOU OWE THEM?
FIVE THOUSAND BUCKS... I CAN'T PAY THE MORTGAGE!
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE BUSINESS? IS IT ANY GOOD?
IT'S OKAY... BUT MY CREDIT WITH THE BANKS IS GONE, ... FINITO!!
HOO BOY, THAT'S THE END OF US, TOO!
SIGH

OOHHHH... OOOH GOD ELTON...NO NOT HERE... NOTHERE!
REBECCA REBECCA
ELTON... WE SHOULD NOT DO THIS IN THE HALL ...LIKE, LIKE ANIMALS
OH R:: BE:: AH... I WANT YOU SO
AND I WANT YOU ELTON...BUT WE'VE GOT A LOT OF PROBLEMS... I'M JEWISH AND YOU'RE GENTILE! OH...MY FOLKS WILL DIE!! BESIDES, WE CAN'T AFFORD TO MARRY!
GROAN Y'R RIGHT WHAT CAN I DO ON, A RUNNERS PAY!?
SHUSH, NOW, ELTON...WE CAN WAIT...MAYBE YOU'LL GET A PROMOTION SOON!
NOT VERY LIKELY!
OH...HELLO... SHAFTSBURY
HELLO MR SHTARKAH

OY... SHAFTSBURY, YOU LOOK LIKE IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD!
FOR ME IT IS!
I'M LOSING THE CHANCE TO MARRY THE ONE GIRL WHO CAN CHANGE MY LIFE! I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!
I KNOW..I KNOW... WE ARE ALL STRUGGLING IN THE WATER-TRYING TO CLUTCH AT A FLOATING LOG TO SURVIVE ...
LOOK AT ME! FINALLY, I GOT A LITTLE JOB...A CHANCE TO MAYBE MAKE A FEW DOLLARS.. AND IT SLIPS THROUGH MY FINGERS ALL BECAUSE A LUMBER YARD GOES BROKE!
WELL, WHAT ABOUT THE CREDITORS? ...CAN'T YOU TALK TO THEM?
THE CREDITOR IS THE BANK! WHO CAN TALK TO A BANK?
I'M SURE IF SOME PROMISE OF CONTINUING INCOME CAN BE SHOWN-THE BANK COULD BE TALKED INTO EXTENDING THE LOANS..
LISTEN..YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE THINGS..YOU CAN HELP ME, PLEASE... IF YOU WILL ...MAYBE I CAN HELP YOU WITH YOUR PROBLEM IN RETURN...
PERHAPS I CAN..
72

SHAFTSBURY? SHAFTSBURY?? OUR RUNNER?... WHAT'S HE WANT TO SEE ME ABOUT ?
I DON'T KNOW, HE'S WAITING OVER THERE
SMITH WHITE
MEMBERS
STOCK EXCHANGE
MR. SMITH, I WANT TO PROPOSE AN IDEA FOR THE FIRM... THERE ARE PROFITS IN BANKRUPTCIES!
SURE ARE LOTS OF THEM THESE DAYS
...I KNOW OF A LUMBER BUSINESS THAT CAN BE LEVERAGED...THE UPTOWN BANK IS HOLDING ITS PAPER! I HAVE PEOPLE WHO CAN OPERATE IT..KEEP IT AFLOAT WHILE WE ISSUE STOCK...A PRIVATE PLACEMENT DIVIDED AMONG A FEW INSIDERS...LIKE SPECIAL CLIENTS...AND US !!
THEN, AS SOON AS WE HAVE A DECENT BALANCE SHEET- WE TAKE IT PUBLIC... AT GOOD MULTIPLES- WE UNLOAD ! ALL FOR A $5000. INVESTMENT!
WEISS... FIX UP A DESK FOR SHAFTSBURY HERE! HE'S GOING TO WORK ON NEW ISSUE UNDERWRITING! ... AND MAKE OUT A CHECK FOR $5000.

HIM?? BUT....
HE'S GOT SOME VERY GOOD IDEAS, WEISS!
SHAFTSBURY'S FAMILY'S GOODSTOCK...HE COMES FROM CLASS...BESIDES WE WONT HAVE TO CHANGE HIS NAME LIKE WE DID YOURS.. EH, "WHITE".. HA,HA, HA...
CLASS, ...WEISS... CLASS WILL TELL!!
ELTONTOWN BANK
WELL, JACOB YOU JUST BOUGHT CONTROL OF LOMBARDI LUMBER YARD
I DON'T UNDERSTAND ELTON
DOES THIS MEAN WE GET THE LUMBER FOR THE JOB ?
SIMPLE... WITH THE $5000 I LOANED YOU - YOU PAID OFF THE BANK ...NOW, YOU REPAY ME WITH 100,000 SHARES OF LOMBARDI STOCK - OUT OF THE 250 000 JUST ISSUED...THUS, YOU HAVE A MAJOR SHARE OF STOCK...ITS CONTROL!!
OY... I'M CONFUSED...
SIMPLE ...YOU AND ANGELO NOW OPERATE THE YARD! DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE STOCK - THEY'LL BE HELD BY SMITH & WHITE... IF YOU RUN IT WELL, YOUR SHARES WILL APPRECIATE ...
THANK YOU ELTON!
IT'S A NEW BEGINNING ANGELO, ... MY PARTNER!

# CHAPTER 9
# SANCTUARY

## GERMANY RESTRICTS EMIGRATION & TRAVEL

JUNE 26, 1934

In a decree, the German government has restricted travellers to 50 marks in silver — a sum virtually worthless on the foreign exchange. In a second decree it reduced the amount emigrants may take with them to 2000 marks equal to about $650 . . . U.S. currency. In the case of Jews who want to go to Palestine, they may take out a little more — enough to meet the British Mandate regulations. They could also get a little more if they agree to buy German goods when in Palestine.

This, according to a N.Y. Times correspondent, has the effect of stopping all travel outside of Germany for those without funds abroad.

## GOEBBELS PUBLISHES CALL TO DISMISS ALL JEWS IN EXPORT FIELD

### URGES REPLACEMENT OF 'NON-ARYANS' BY MEN OF "GERMAN RACE"

JAN. 15, 1934

The Nazi anti-semitic program was pushed farther by Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda in his newspaper, "Der Angriff." The article said, "It seems intolerable to us that German firms still permit Jews to represent them abroad." He added that those concerned know this and will now make the necessary changes.

## REICH TAKES ACTION TO DISCOURAGE ALL MIXED MARRIAGES

MARCH 26, 1934

Berlin: Aryans who married 'non-Aryans' after the Nazi revolution may not use the divorce courts. The journal, German Justice, announced today that unless those who seek to annul such marriages by legal proceedings may do so only if they file during a six month period under the new law. It said, "All those who contracted mixed-marriages after their condemnation by National Socialism placed themselves in opposition to public opinion and will have to bear the consequences of their acts."

## NAZIS NOW BAN JEWISH ACTORS

MARCH 7, 1934

Berlin: Anti-Jewish boycotts are now being encouraged officially in Germany. The Nazi organ, "Der Deutsche" has called on all places of entertainment to bar Jewish performers. This follows an order by Dr. Joseph Goebbels to remove all "non-Aryans" from the German stage. S.A. (Storm Troopers) have been stationed at cabaret entrances to enforce the boycott.

## U.S. SECRETARY OF LABOR SAYS INCREASED IMMIGRATION NOW WOULD COMPLICATE U.S. UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS

JAN. 30, 1934

Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor said in a speech today that her Department has been making efforts to "humanize the immigration service." She added that she perceived no sentiment in the country to increase present immigration.

## THE N.J. STATE JEWISH WAR VETERANS ASSN. ASKS U.S. TO LOWER IMMIGRATION BARRIERS FOR ALL REFUGEES

MAR. 12, 1934

In a resolution at its annual convention, today, the group called on the United States to permit more German refugees to enter the country.

75

JACOB... CAN I TALK TO YOU A MINUTE...
SURE, REBBE... WE'LL BE FINISHED HERE SOON...
JACOB, I GOT A LETTER I WANT YOU SHOULD READ
ME?
Rebbe Itzhak Bensohn
55 Droppie Ave.
Bronx, New York
Nuremberg
Sept, 1933
Dear Rebbe:
Our Rebbe, Hershel Minch, here in Nuremberg told me to write to you about the terrible things that are happening here.
Since a year now the Nazis are making life unbearable for us. A year ago my parents tailor shop was smashed by hoodlums yelling JEWS! JEWS!! The police just watched and laughed.
2.
Then they made my father sweep up the street-glass from his windows they smashed. Then the neighbors on our street came out and made fun of him because he wore his best hat and coat - trying not to lose his dignity. But soon he lost his temper and struck at one young tormenter with his broom. A brown shirt shot and killed him on the spot.
We have taken my mother in with us.
OY!
WAIT, THERE'S MORE!
3.
But, I'm afraid not for long! We have been notified that my husband will be fired from his post soon because I am Jewish!
Momma is 58 years old, she won't last long here. We must send her to America at once! She says she remembers a man, Jacob Shtarka from our neighborhood who went to America 30 years ago.
Maybe you can find him and if he is alive and now a U.S. citizen — maybe he can have pity and help her to come over. My mother's name was Frieda Gold. Also here is her picture to help him remember.
Yours truly,
Hilda Fremd
(Daughter)
..SO, ARE YOU THE SAME JACOB SHTARKAH SHE'S TALKING ABOUT, HERE?
OH, MY GOD YES, YES... FRIEDA GOLD I REMEMBER, I REMEMBER, WE ALMOST MARRIED...
16

Mrs. Hilda Fremd.
8 Gaststrasse
Nuremberg, Germany

Dear Hilda;

I am Jacob Shtarkah the person you wrote about to Rebbe Bensohn. He told me about your trouble and your mother's problem.

Yes, I remember her very well. Please ask her to write to me right away.

In the meantime I will ask a friend about bringing her over. Be well.

Jacob Shtarkah

Mr. Jacob Shtarkah
55 Dropsie Avenue
Bronx, New York. U.S.A.

Dear Jacob;

Thank God! My daughter with whom I'm living now gave me your letter. I don't have to tell you how bad things are here. It must be in all the papers. Each day brings worse news. Right now they are leaving my daughter and her husband alone for a little while because he is a doctor and they are not sure if he's Jewish or not. You see his parents by Austrian. So while they investigate he is still safe.

I hope to hear from you anything about immigration. I have filed my name at the U.S. Consulate already.

God bless you

Frieda Gold

JACOB, I'VE GOT GOOD NEWS... THROUGH AN OLD COLLEGE CLASSMATE WHO IS NOW WITH THE U.S. IMMIGRATION SERVICE, I GOT SOME PAPERS FOR YOU TO FILE IN ORDER TO BRING YOUR FRIEND, FRIEDA GOLD, FROM GERMANY
THANK YOU... ELTON I KNEW YOU COULD HELP

YOU'LL HAVE TO LIST YOUR ASSETS AND PLEDGE YOU'LL SEE THAT SHE WON'T BECOME A WARD OF THE STATE
IN OTHER WORDS I BECOME RESPONSIBLE FOR HER ?

77

Mrs. Frieda Gold
In care of Fremd
8 Gaststrasse
Nuremberg, Germany

Dear Frieda;

I have good news. Elton Shaftsbury, a friend, helped me with a connection and I filed the papers. Now we must wait! Meanwhile, I am not a rich man but I will be able to afford it for you a passage in case you need.

Jacob

Don't forget to get your passport so there wont be a delay

Mr. Jacob Shtarkah
55 Dropsie Avenue
Bronx, N.Y. U.S.A.

Dear Jacob;

God will surely bless you for your kindness. There are new laws here that permit the state to confiscate Jewish property. Our store was just taken from us. Also, I have to pay a fine because my late husband did not put up a sign on the store saying it was Jewish owned. So, I am without any money. I will have to accept your offer to pay my passage. Believe me I will repay you when I get to America. I am not too old to work. Do you remember that weekend we went on a picnic and stopped in that farm house the lady said the same thing when we offered to pay her for food?

God bless You,

Frieda

HEY, JACOB, WHERE YOU BEEN TODAY...BOY, BUSINESS HAS PICKED UP SINCE YOU HAD THE IDEA TO RUN AN ADVERTISEMENT.
I'VE BEEN DOWNTOWN, ANGELO - I GOT A PROBLEM!
I'M TRYING TO BRING OVER A GIRL..I MEAN, A LADY, I USED TO KNOW FROM THE OTHER SIDE!
...HA, I KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT... I CAME OVER ILLEGAL MYSELF, Y'KNOW, JACOB

WELL, ANGELO, I GOT TO PLEDGE MY ASSETS-SO, SINCE WE'RE PARTNERS IN THE LUMBER YARD I NEED YOUR PERMISSION
SHOO, JACOB, SHOO... BUT IT AINT SO EASY!

Nu[illegible]asse
Nu[illegible]erg, Germany

Dear Frieda;

Things are working out fine here so I bought you a ticket - look in this envelope I put it in. Its good for a year so as soon as you get your visa you can leave.

Yes, I remember our days in Nuremberg before we parted. Those were happy days. I still remember how you looked. Its 30 years now. Well, I'm sure that you haven't changed as much as I have.

So, let me know at once when you are leaving so I can find a place for you to live

Be well,

Jacob

THERE'S QUOTAS... SAY, I GOT A GUY - A PAISAN.. HE IS WITH THE SICILIAN FRIENDS SOCIETY MAYBE HE CAN..
NO THANKS... IT'S A LITTLE BETTER THESE DAYS... THE GOVERNMENT LIFTED THE QUOTA LAST YEAR NOW, I NEED MONEY FOR HER PASSAGE ...YOU MIND IF I BORROW FROM THE BUSINESS ?

5[illegible]
Bronx, NY, USA

Dear Jacob

TERRIBLE NEWS!! The police came to look for my daughter and son-in-law. They have proof that he is half-Jewish on his mother's side. Josef (that's his name) and Hilda were in Munich at a Medical Conference so they're still free-luckily.

Please Jacob you must add their names - get them out too - They're in danger. How can I leave without my children?

Pleasy try Jacob its getting worse here - You wouldn't believe what's happening!

Frieda

(continued on page 39)

# EVEN MORE in '84

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SUNDAY, JULY 28, 1940

# The SPIRIT

BY Will EISNER

THOUGH BRANDED AN OUTLAW BY THE POLICE, *THE SPIRIT*, IN REALITY DENNY COLT, WHO IS BELIEVED DEAD, FIGHTS CRIME AND CRIMINALS BEYOND THE REACH OF THE LAW.

• • • •

THE SPIRIT'S REMARKABLE ABILITIES MAKE HIM A RELENTLESS FOE OF THE UNDERWORLD....

LA-DEES AND *GENTLEMEN!* WE PRESENT PALYACHI, THE *KILLER CLOWN!*

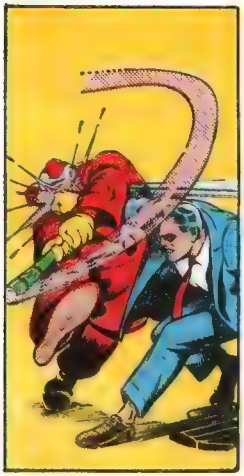
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY, WITHIN VIEW OF *THE SPIRIT'S* SECRET HIDEOUT, WILDWOOD CEMETERY, A TRAVELLING CIRCUS PLAYS ITS GAUDY SHOW FOR A FUN-SEEKING AUDIENCE...

THE FIRST ACT IS ON.. THE AUDIENCE IS CONVULSED WITH LAUGHTER.
AMUSED BY A CLOWN KNOWN AS PALYACHI.
THE ACT OVER, LET US FOLLOW PALYACHI, AS HE HEADS FOR A DRESSING ROOM MARKED WITH A STAR.
MARKA, DID YOU HEAR THEM?
YES.. SO WHAT? TO THEM YOU ARE A STUPID LITTLE CLOWN! MAKE SOMETHING OF YOURSELF..YOU WANT TO MARRY ME?? WELL, DO SOMETHING TO PROVE YOUR LOVE!
BUT WHAT?
THERE! KILL FLIPO, THE TRAPEZE ARTIST! I HATE HIM!
KILL? NO!NO!
AFRAID?? BAH! COWARD! I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN! GO AHEAD! DO IT! REMEMBER, IF YOU LOVE ME..
KILL? I CAN'T! I'VE NEVER HARMED A SOUL...(GULP) BUT I MUST! IF I'M TO WIN HER..I-I-I'M MAD ABOUT HER!
LATER THAT NIGHT...THE FINAL ACT IS ANNOUNCED.
INTRODUCING FLIPO, THE AERIAL ARTIST, WHO WILL DO FOUR FLIPS IN MID-AIR!
DRUMS ROLL IN ENDLESS THUNDER, AS FLIPO SWINGS FROM ONE SIDE OF THE HUGE TENT TO THE OTHER. AS HE NEARS ONE SIDE, HE SEES PALYACHI HIDDEN IN THE RAFTERS.
PALYACHI!! DON'T
UNSEEN, PALYACHI'S KNIFE FLIES THROUGH THE AIR, AND A MAN IS MURDERED BEFORE THE EYES OF TWO THOUSAND PEOPLE.
DEAD!! A KNIFE IN HIS CHEST! BUT NO ONE WAS NEAR HIM! HOW IS IT POSSIBLE?

THE DESIRE TO KILL IS NOW STRONG WITHIN PALYACHI THE CLOWN... AND THE NEXT NIGHT A KILLER CLOWN STALKS THE STREETS!
MURDER
ROBBERY
BANK
I HAVE BROUGHT YOU ALL I HAVE STOLEN! WILL YOU MARRY ME NOW?
YOU ARE VERY SWEET, BUT I MUST HAVE MORE A MILLION DOLLARS AND THEN.... PERHAPS I'LL MARRY YOU!
MEANWHILE, NOT FAR AWAY IN THE SPIRIT'S UNDERGROUND HIDEOUT.
GOSH! SHO' IS WUNNERFUL WAY DESE DETECTIVES SOLVE DEM CRIMES, MIST' SPIRIT!
VERY SIMPLE, EBONY.. A MATTER OF THINKING ALONG THE PROPER LINES.
FAMOUS DETECTIVES
YEAH? I S'POSE YOU COULD SOLVE DE KILLIN' IN DIS MAWNIN'S PAPER JES' LIKE SHERLOCK HOLMES USTA DO?
LET ME SEE.. HMM RESIN
LATEST IN SERIES OF CLUELESS CRIMES! Bank clerk murdered! No clues, save a bit of powdered resin... Police believe clue to be unimportant
THAT'S AN EASY ONE. THE RESIN DUST INDICATES SOME SORT OF CIRCUS PERFORMER. IT HELPS THEM GRIP ROPE MORE FIRMLY. THE KILLER IS A CIRCUS PERFORMER!
CIRCUS!?
SAY, MR. SPIRIT! DEY'S BEEN A CIRCUS NEAR HERE FO' DAYS! I AIN'T NOTICED BEFO'!
WHAT? THAT'S A HUNCH! BY JOVE! I THINK I'LL TAKE A LOOK!
THIS IS A LAUGH! A CASE RIGHT IN MY FRONT DOOR ALL THE TIME!
THE CIRCUS IS CLOSED FOR THE NIGHT AS THE SPIRIT HEADS DOWN THE DESERTED MIDWAY.
NOW, LET'S SEE, I'LL PLAY ANOTHER HUNCH, AND TAKE A LOOK AT THE LADIES' DRESSING ROOMS FIRST!

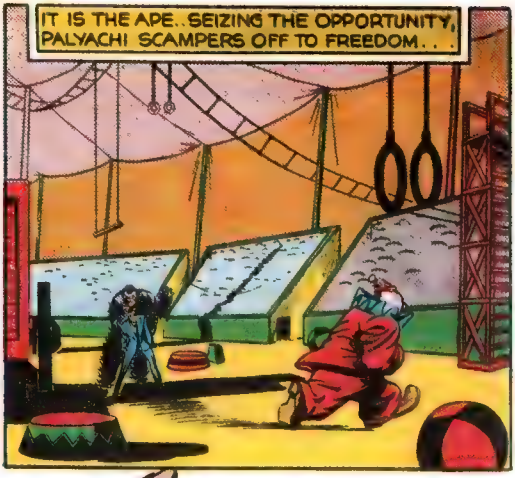
THIS MUST BE THE STAR'S ROOM.. HOLY SMOKE! JEWELRY AND MONEY! ODD FOR A CIRCUS PERFORMER TO BE SO WEALTHY!
NEED ANY HELP, COPPER?
AH CORRECTION. I AM NOT A POLICEMAN.. I AM THE SPIRIT!
OH... I'VE HEARD OF YOU!
QUITE AN INTERESTING COLLECTION OF JEWELRY YOU HAVE! I'LL WAGER THEY ALL FIT THE DESCRIPTION OF THOSE STOLEN LAST NIGHT.. COME CLEAN!
WELL, YES.. THEY ARE! SO WHAT?
I DIDN'T DO IT, BUT I'LL MAKE A DEAL WITH YOU I'M ANXIOUS TO GET RID OF PALYACHI ANYHOW!
SO I'LL TELL YOU WHO DID IT.. TURN HIM OVER TO THE COPS AND THEN YOU AND I CAN GO INTO PARTNERSHIP.. YOU'RE PRETTY CLEVER AND HANDSOME TOO.
WHO?
PALYACHI, THE CLOWN DID IT!
THAT'S ALL I WANT TO KNOW.. HEY! SOMEONE'S BEEN LISTENING IN! WHY, IT'S A CLOWN! ONE SIDE!
STREAKING IN PURSUIT, THE SPIRIT GAINS RAPIDLY ON THE CLOWN.
BUT ABOVE
OH! SO THERE YOU ARE! LOST YOU FOR A MOMENT!
LIKE A TRAINED ACROBAT, THE SPIRIT SEIZES A TRAPEZE AND DEFTLY SWINGS IN PURSUIT. . . . .
YOU'RE PLAYING ON MY HOME GROUNDS, SPIRIT! YOU'RE AS GOOD AS FINISHED!
AN INSTANT LATER THE TWO CLASH IN MID-AIR!

FOR AN INSTANT THEY GRAPPLE. THEN BOTH LOSE THEIR GRIP ON THE BARS, AND LOCKED IN COMBAT THEY PLUMMET DOWNWARD, LANDING ON A SCAFFOLD..
BUT THE SPIRIT REGAINS HIS FEET INSTANTLY.. A DYNAMITE LEFT SENDS THE CLOWN CRASHING INTO THE SUPPORTS..THE BOARDS COLLAPSE ON THE SPIRIT..
THROWING HIM OFF..
AND HE LANDS IN A NET.
HA! HA! NOW I'VE GOT YOU! HA HA HA HA
THE CLOWN STAGGERS TO A CAGE HIGH IN THE RAFTERS.
HA! HA! COME, JOCOPO! I HAVE A JOB FOR YOU..HA HA! THEY PUT YOU UP HERE BECAUSE YOU KILL MEN..WELL, NOW I FREE YOU!
A SNARLING BEAST EMERGES AND LUNGES.
THERE HE IS, GET HIM!
BUT THE NET CANNOT HOLD THE WEIGHT OF THE APE IT COLLAPSES
THE SPIRIT NIMBLY CATCHES A TRAPEZE BAR AND WHIRLS
OH OH! THERE'S THE CLOWN TRYING TO ESCAPE!
NOT SO FAST, "PALY!"
WITH THE TIMING OF A TRIP HAMMER THE SPIRIT PUMPS BLOW AFTER BLOW INTO THE KILLER CLOWN..
FIRST, I'M GOING TO BEAT YOU INTO THE PROPER FRAME OF MIND! THEN I'LL PRESENT YOU TO POLICE COMMISSIONER DOLAN!



SUDDENLY A POWERFUL PAW CLOSES ABOUT THE SPIRIT'S COLLAR IN A VISE-LIKE GRIP...

IT IS THE APE.. SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY, PALYACHI SCAMPERS OFF TO FREEDOM...

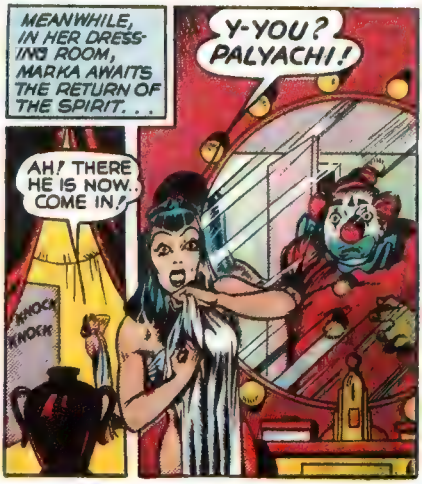


IN A FLASH, THE SPIRIT IS OUT OF HIS COAT.

THE APE RAISES HIS ARM AND BRINGS IT DOWN IN A MURDEROUS SWIPE... BY A HAIR'S BREADTH, THE SPIRIT ESCAPES INSTANT DEATH..

THE MONSTER STAGGERS... THE BLOWS OF THE SPIRIT AT LAST TAKE EFFECT. WITH A GROAN THE APE SINKS TO THE SAWDUST..

*MEANWHILE, IN HER DRESSING ROOM, MARKA AWAITS THE RETURN OF THE SPIRIT...*



NO NO NO! (GULP) LISTEN TO ME.. I DIDN'T MEAN TO SQUEAL ON YOU.. I LOVE YOU! HEH HEH.. I'LL MARRY YOU! DO YOU HEAR?
SUDDENLY THE PLEADING IS CUT SHORT.. A HORRIBLE SILENCE IS PUNCTUATED BY AN AWFUL GASP.
THEN AFTER A MOMENT, THE LITTLE MAD CLOWN LIFTS HIS FACE IN A LAUGHTER SO BLOOD-CURDLING THAT IT MAKES THE SPIRIT FREEZE IN HORROR.
THE SPIRIT LEAPS TO A NEARBY TELEPHONE.
HELLO, DOLAN? THIS IS THE SPIRIT! IF YOU COME DOWN TO THE CIRCUS, YOU'LL FIND THE KILLER YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR!
AND NOW YOU'D BETTER TELL ME THE WHOLE STORY!
MEANWHILE, COMMISSIONER DOLAN ARRIVES WITH A SQUAD OF POLICE.
SURROUND THE PLACE! NO! LOOK.. THERE GOES THE SPIRIT! NAB HIM!
WITH THE ENTIRE SQUAD AT HIS HEELS, THE SPIRIT ROUNDS A CORNER.
A MOMENT LATER..
I KILLED HER! HA-HA-HA!
YOU'LL GET THE CHAIR FOR THIS!
WAIT, DOLAN!
WHERE ARE MY MEN?
OFF ON A LITTLE SPRINT. SHE IS THE REAL KILLER! SHE WAS THE RING-MASTER, AND THE CLOWN BUT A FREAK OF HER DESIGN IN A CIRCUS OF MURDER!
...AND AS ANOTHER PEAL OF MAD LAUGHTER SHAKES THE CLOWN, THE SPIRIT VANISHES INTO THE MIST...

"Overwhelming... gripping... quintessentially Corben."–*Maurice Horn*

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# Mr. Mystic

by W. MORGAN THOMAS

ENDOWED WITH STRANGE, MYSTERIOUS POWERS BY A COUNCIL OF SEVEN LAMAS, MR. MYSTIC, A YOUNG AMERICAN, PLEDGES HIS LIFE TO COMBAT THE WORLD'S EVILS

RETURNING TO CADIWA, MR. MYSTIC GOES TO THE PALACE OF KING BAHROUD.

MR. MYSTIC! COME IN! COME IN!

HELLO, YOUR MAJESTY. I'VE COME TO TAKE ELENA TO PRISON, WHERE SHE CAN DO NO MORE HARM.

YOU KNOW, MR MYSTIC, I'VE BEEN THINKING THAT PERHAPS YOU'D BETTER LEAVE HER HERE SHE'S BEEN SO HELPFUL TO ME!

ELENA HELPFUL?

OH, YES! CONFIDENTIALLY, I'M GOING TO DECLARE WAR ON SULTON BIWA, AND SHE'S GIVEN ME MANY VALUABLE HINTS!

HMM. NO DOUBT! AND I SUPPOSE IT WAS HER IDEA TO START THE WAR IN THE FIRST PLACE.. WELL, WASN'T IT?

HEH HEH. WELL..... YES.. REALLY, SHE'S A WONDERFUL GIRL. SO DYNAMIC! SO.

YES. AND SO TREACHEROUS THAT SHE'LL SELL ALL YOUR PLANS TO THE ENEMY!

I MUST SAY, MR. MYSTIC, YOU'RE NOT VERY COMPLIMENTARY!

YOU'RE UP TO NO GOOD, ELENA! CADIWA HAS BEEN AT PEACE FOR CENTURIES, AND NOW YOU HAVE TO START TROUBLE!

YOU HOLD ON A MINUTE! YOU'RE ALWAYS SAYING I DO WRONG. HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT I MIGHT THINK I'M IN THE RIGHT?! ANYWAY, YOU CAN'T STOP ME!
YOU'RE CONSTANTLY TELLING ME THAT I HAVEN'T ANY POWER OVER YOU BECAUSE YOU HAVE SECRETS OF MAGIC TOO. FUNNY THAT I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM!
ELÉNA, YOU WANT WAR. MR. MYSTIC DOESN'T. I CAN'T MAKE UP MY MIND, SO YOU TWO FIGHT IT OUT WITH YOUR TRICKS!
ARE YOU DOUBTING MY WORD? I HAVE MAGICAL POWERS AS GOOD AS YOURS, AND CAN PROVE IT, TOO!!
Distributed by Register and Tribune Syndicate
GOOD! IF I WIN, THERE'S TO BE NO WAR! IF ELÉNA WINS, THERE WILL BE. AGREED?
I AGREE!
I'LL DESTROY YOU WITH A FEATHER, MR. MYSTIC! WATCH!
BLOW AWAY, WHITE FEATHER! RISE! RISE! BECOME A CONDOR AND KILL YOUR PREY!
THAT BIRD'S COMING STRAIGHT FOR ME! I'LL HAVE TO DO SOMETHING QUICKLY!
HO! GENTLE TABBY CAT! I'LL MAKE YOU LARGE AND FIERCE SO YOU CAN VANQUISH MY FOE!
IN A FLASH, THE CAT BECOMES A HUGE BUNDLE OF FURY.
BY MEANS OF LEVITATION, MR. MYSTIC KEEPS THE ANIMAL IN THE AIR.. WITH A QUICK LEAP, THE CAT POUNCES ON THE BIRD'S BACK AND WITH A VICIOUS SWIPE BREAKS ITS NECK.

YOUR BIRD IS DEAD. GIVE UP!
THE BODY IS DEAD BUT THE SOUL LIVES. WATCH!
AT HER WORD A GIANT MONSTER RISES FROM THE CARCASS AND TOWERS TO THE LOFTY CEILING
WITH ONE TERRIBLE BLOW THE GARGANTUA CRUSHES THE BEWILDERED CAT.
TURNING ON MR MYSTIC, IT GRINS EVILY AND REACHES FOR HIM . . .
SNATCHING UP THE MAGICIAN, IT SLOWLY TIGHTENS ITS GRIP.
SUDDENLY IT STOPS IN AMAZEMENT AND STARES "MR. MYSTIC HAS VANISHED!!"
HERE I AM, MY FOUL FRIEND... QUITE ALIVE!
THAT'S IT! COME RIGHT AT ME WITH YOUR GUARD WIDE OPEN!
AS THE GIANT TOPPLES BACKWARD, HE CRASHES AGAINST THE WALL, CRUMBLES IT LIKE PAPER, AND FALLS INTO THE GARDEN OUTSIDE.

NOW, SEE WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO THE KINGS NICE WALL! YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED!
AS MR MYSTIC STEPS OUTOF THE PALACE, THE MONSTER HURLS THE UPROOTED TREE
A QUICK GESTURE AND THE TREE BOOMERANGS AROUND, FLYING STRAIGHT FOR ITS PITCHER
JUST IN TIME, THE CREATURE DUCKS OUT OF THE WAY.
ANGRILY SHAKING ITS FIST AT MR. MYSTIC, IT IS UNAWARE OF THE TREE AGAIN SPINNING ABOUT AND HEADED STRAIGHT AT IT
WITH A TREMENDOUS CRASH THE GNARLED TREE CONNECTS WITH THE BASE OF THE GIANT'S SKULL
IT'S DEAD! I COMMAND IT TO MELT AND SEEP INTO THE GROUND! THERE!
IN A SECOND, MR. MYSTIC RETURNS TO HIS NORMAL SIZE.
I AM FINISHED! YOU HAVE WON!
I SHALL KEEP MY PROMISE AND CALL OFF THE WAR!
GOOD!

MY POWER WAS GIVEN TO ME BY CARDIN THE TERRIBLE, WITH THE WARNING THAT IF I EVER WAS BEATEN IN A MATCH, I'D LOSE ANY MAGIC I'VE EVER KNOWN, AND I HAVE.
CARDIN! THAT FIEND! NO WONDER YOU HAVE WORKED ON THE SIDE OF EVIL SO LONG! PERHAPS WE CAN SAVE YOU YET!
I NEVER DID BELIEVE YOU WERE ALL BAD! BUT WAIT! I WANT TO SEE IF YOU REALLY DID LOSE YOUR POWER..AH! YOU HAVE!
WHY, SHE'S A LITTLE GIRL!
HELLO, MY DEAR...MYSTIC, SHE MAKES A VERY PRETTY CHILD, BUT REALLY, SHE WAS MUCH NICER BEFORE.
I WISH I WAS BIG AGAIN, TOO!
ALL RIGHT. IF YOU PROMISE TO BE A GOOD GIRL FOREVER AND EVER, I'LL MAKE YOU BIG AGAIN!
I PROMISE!
THEN I COMMAND YOU, ELÉNA, TO RETURN TO YOUR FORMER SELF BUT THIS TIME TO PUT YOUR TALENTS TO WORK ON THE SIDE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS!
AMAZING!
THAT NIGHT, ELÉNA PROVES A CHARMING COMPANION, GLAD TO BE RID OF THE YOKE OF CARDIN.
I'LL MISS YOU WHEN YOU GO. WON'T YOU LET ME GO WITH YOU? I CAN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF YOU LEAVING!
DON'T WORRY, I'LL BE BACK SOON. EVER S..ICE I FIRST SAW YOU I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING NOW THE TIME HAS COME!

HAL FOSTER
AND COTH IS MAGNIFICENT! ONE AFTER ANOTHER THE WEARERS OF THE WHITE EMBLEM FALL BENEATH HIS AWFUL STROKES. BUT PRINCE VALIANT NOTES THAT MOST OF HIS VICTIMS ARE STRUCK FROM BEHIND WHILE FACING ANOTHER OPPONENT!
NEXT WEEK: Kerwin's Ordeal.
4-19-59
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# Prince Valiant

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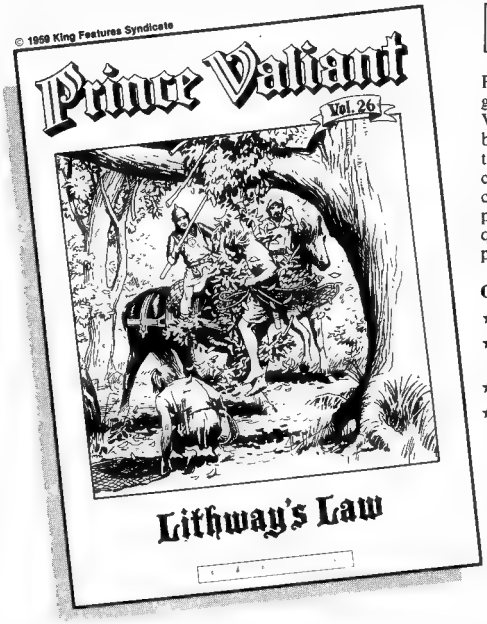


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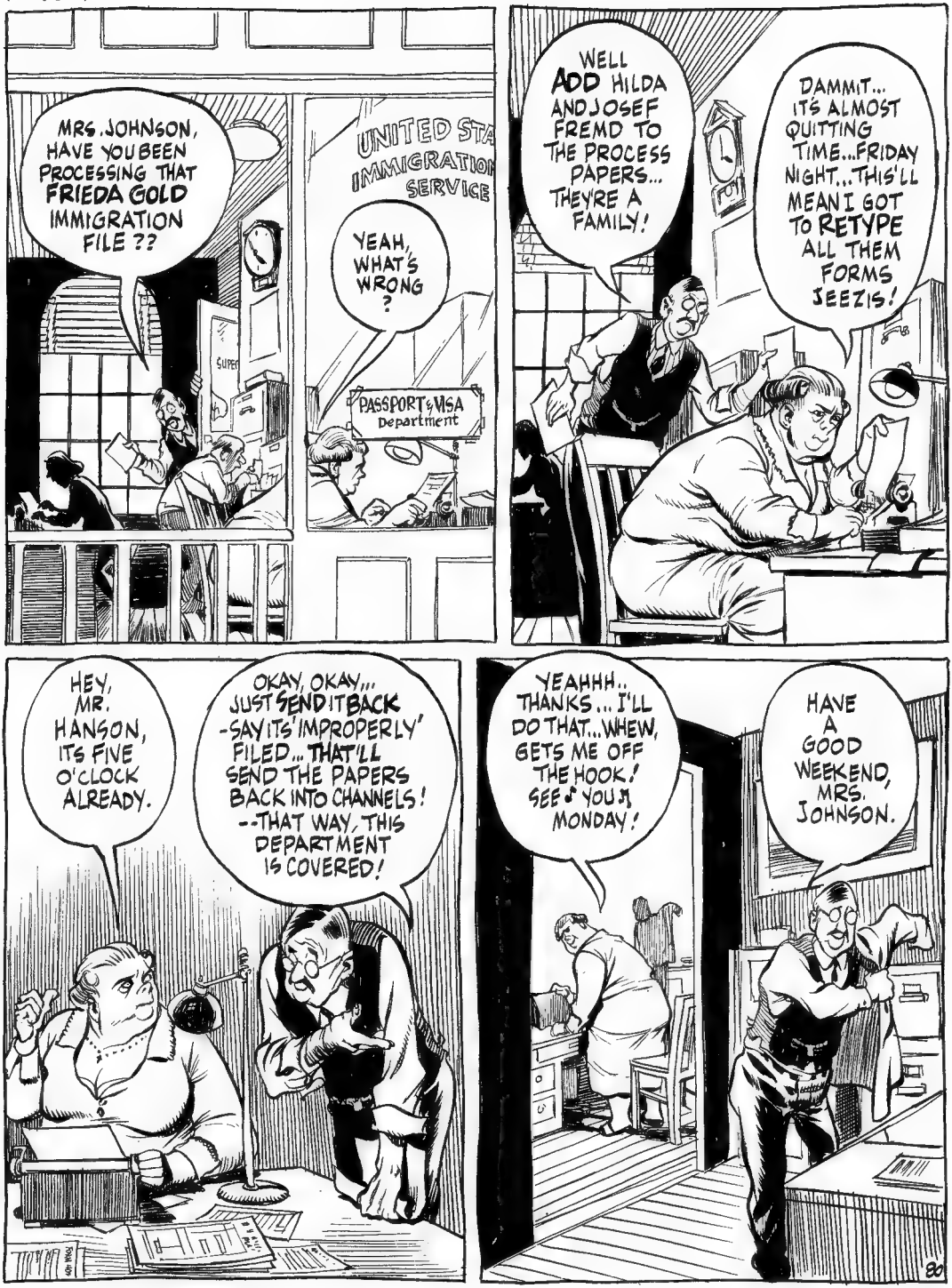
(From page 23)


MRS. JOHNSON, HAVE YOU BEEN PROCESSING THAT FRIEDA GOLD IMMIGRATION FILE ??
UNITED STA IMMIGRATION SERVICE
YEAH, WHAT'S WRONG ?
PASSPORT & VISA Department
WELL ADD HILDA AND JOSEF FREMD TO THE PROCESS PAPERS... THEY'RE A FAMILY!
DAMMIT... IT'S ALMOST QUITTING TIME...FRIDAY NIGHT...THIS'LL MEAN I GOT TO RETYPE ALL THEM FORMS JEEZIS!
HEY, MR. HANSON, IT'S FIVE O'CLOCK ALREADY.
OKAY, OKAY,... JUST SEND IT BACK -SAY IT'S 'IMPROPERLY' FILED... THAT'LL SEND THE PAPERS BACK INTO CHANNELS! --THAT WAY, THIS DEPARTMENT IS COVERED!
YEAHHH.. THANKS... I'LL DO THAT...WHEW, GETS ME OFF THE HOOK! SEE ♪ YOU ♫ MONDAY!
HAVE A GOOD WEEKEND, MRS. JOHNSON.

Mrs Hilda Gold
8 Gastrasse
Nuremberg, Germany
Dear Frieda;
You have to be patient. I had to re-file the papers today because I wanted to include your children to the list. So now there's more delay. I'm sure it will work out soon.
I hear now its getting easier to bring people over.
I must tell you how much I think about our affair long ago and how close we came — if not for your father (he should rest in peace).
Don't worry
Jacob
Mr Jacob Shakkah
53 Dropsie Avenue
Bronx, New York, U.S.A.
Dear Jacob:
Please, you must do something quickly!! Josef was arrested for treating "Aryans" at his clinic. They don't want any Jewish Doctors doing that.
My daughter says they will let him out with only a fine but it will be prison if it happens again. Dear Jop — how can a Doctor deny help to anyone — Jew or Gentile?! People are people.
I'm so afraid, please do something!
Frieda.
JACOB! YOU LOOK NOT SO GOOD LATELY... YOU TAKING YOUR HEART PILLS DANNY GAVE YOU? ... WHAT'S THE GOOD TO HAVE A SON, A DOCTOR, IF YOU DON'T LISTEN TO HIM ?!
YES, YES, RIFKA !
LOOK HOW YOU'RE DRESSED, WEAR A SWEATER, JACOB !
YES RIFKA !
ALSO, I DON'T LIKE WHAT'S GOING ON WITH OUR REBBECA, I THINK SHE'S GOT A FELLA!.. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO?
UH, HUH !
HA.. YOU AINT EVEN HEARD A WORD, JACOB!

JACOB - THIS IS PETE... HE'S WITH THE SICILIAN SOCIETY... I AST HIM OVER -MAYBE HE CAN HELP YOU.
SURE... I GOT LOTSA FRIENDS IN IMMIGRATION ...Y'GET ME??
IT'S NOT SICILY IT'S IN GERMANY I NEED HELP, FAST!
LOMBA
LUMBER Y
DON' MATTER... ANGELO TOL' ME YER PROBLEM...THEM PAPERS AINT GOIN' NO PLACE UNLESS WE POOSH... ALL I GOTTA DO IS MAKE A CALL... ER... YOU GOT $500.?
OH GOD... NO... NOT THAT MUCH
OKAY... FOR A FRIEND OF ANGELO I DO IT FOR $250.!! GIMME 50 BUCKS DOWN - THE REST WHEN SHE GETS HERE!
OKAY, OKAY

Mrs. Frieda Gold
8 Gastrasse
Nuremberg, Germany

Dear Frieda

I have good news! I arranged with a friend who has special influence.

By now you should have a call from the U.S. Consulate so you can leave for America at once.

I'll meet you at the boat. I know when you are supposed to arrive.

Be well,

Jacob

Mr Jacob Starkoh
55 Dropsie Avenue
Bronx, New York, U.S.A.

Dear Jacob:

Your letter arrived the same day they came to arrest Josef again. This time on charges he performed an abortion on a Gentile girl who had a baby from a Jew." God was with us and my daughter escaped and is safe somewhere. She made me promise to go on to America where maybe I can help her and Josef get out later.

Yes, today also the Consulate cleared my papers. I'm leaving in the morning. God willing I'll see you in America soon.

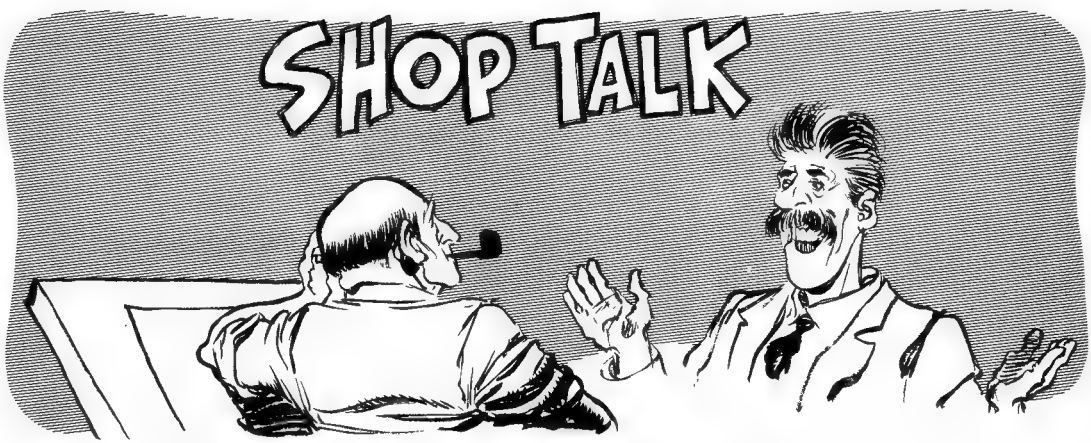
Frieda

JACOB, THESE DAYS YOU LOOK ON ME LIKE I'M A PIECE FURNITURE --YOU DON'T TALK --YOU DON'T EAT. WHAT IS IT ?
I'M NOT HUNGRY, RIFKA
MY BONES TELL ME SOMETHING IS NOT RIGHT !!
ACHH... IT'S ONLY THE WORK AT THE LUMBER YARD...
SHIP SAILINGS
SHOO... I CAN GET A PLACE FOR FRIEDA TO LIVE, JACOB
THANKS, ANGELO
LOMBARDI
SAY... YOU TOL' YOUR WIFE ABOUT FREIDA ?
NO!
DON'T YOU THINK YOU SHOULD ??
HOW CAN I... HOW ??
...WILL SHE UNDERSTAND ?? HOW CAN I TELL HER THAT I'M FEELING INSIDE ME A-A THING THAT I THOUGHT DIED 30 YEARS AGO ?
HOW CAN I EXPLAIN... A... A MIGHT-HAVE-BEEN THAT MIGHT YET BE ??





TO BE CONTINUED




# PHIL SEULING

*Will Eisner's Shop Talk with Phil Seuling took place Oct. 27, 1983 in New York City. The subject was: The Comics Convention and its effects on the comic book artist.*

EISNER: Phil, it's been almost 50 years since comic books in the popular sense appeared on the newsstands of America. Now I, like others who have spent their professional lives in this field, toiled in a medium that endured despite the ridicule of our social-cultural monitors. Time was when the universal judgment presumed reading a comic book was an indication of low literacy: a dope. No other medium—not movies, radio or any other popular communicant—was tarred like that. Even among our own practitioners, illustrators for example, we were second class citizens, something of an *untermensch*, to use the German word for subhuman. The comic book field, having begun with cheap "penny-dreadful" adventure and fantasy material aimed at youngsters, was, for a long time, imprisoned by its self-imposed perimeters. Even the publishers perceived their audience to be average, 10-year-old kids from Kansas City. Charlie Gaines, that's M.C. Gaines [Bill Gaines' father], one of the early comic book publishers and promoters, wrote an article in 1942 pointing to an ancient historical origin of the medium. It had little impact because there was no real marketplace for comic books in the literary world, or acceptance for the medium by academia. Gaines' earnest scholarship certainly didn't revolutionize the size of acceptance and the nature of the output. To grow, a medium needs the nourishment of a marketplace, a climate in which creative energy and talent can germinate. To this must be added a general sense of direction and acceptance. Now, until the '50s, there wasn't an abundance of discriminating demand that could widen creativity and talent. Comic book cartoonists like Siegel & Shuster contributed to our culture, to the popular mythical characters, and Simon & Kirby provided a kind of pre-television adventure material. Comic book artists, writers and their publishers seemed satisfied with the yield of their efforts and sought, for the most part, no other dimension than casual entertainment. Then in the middle '60s, out of the socio-cultural turbulence, came a wave of nostalgia. Comics became a collectible item. Comics became a tool for protest literature. Fans emerged. Suddenly there existed a whole generation who had grown up reading comics as a literary staple. They became articulate. Conventions or comicons appeared. This had perhaps the most far-reaching impact on the field's evolution. It is to me a most important development in the history of the comic book marketplace. I believe it will be seen by historians as an underlying force that changed the direction of comic book content. There's no one I can identify this phenomenon more than with Phil Seuling. Phil, can you tell me something about the origin of the comicon, convention system, and perhaps make some amendments to what I've said?

SEULING: Well, what's interesting is that you have to remind me that comic books are 50 years old, because they were born the same year I was, 1934. I'm very aware of my impending 50th birthday.

EISNER: [Laughs]. Well, maybe there's something mystical about that.

SEULING: Yeah, yeah, the forces are there. I agree with you about the importance that the comicon occupies. By the way, I didn't invent it by any means. In 1964 I was invited by a fellow named Bernie Bubnis to a "comicon," a gathering of comic fans, collectors, at which we'd just talk about comics. It was at 14th St. in New York City. I was a school teacher at the time. So was my partner, Doug Berman. He's now chairman of an English department in a New Jersey high school. We decided that we would supply the refreshments for the convention. This consisted of one case of soda. Bernie had done a wonderful job because he attracted about 100 people. For him to get 100 all at the same place at the same time, that was a marvel. There are buttons around that say 'Comicon '64'. He coined the word. He started the thing, got everybody together. He still comes to conventions and loves it.

EISNER: Give me the scene as you saw it in 1964.

SEULING: The first convention took place on a hot July day. I don't think it was the 4th of July—the 4th of July convention is something that I imposed on comics. It was in a Union meeting hall, which meant a wooden floor, a lot of folding seats. At the time, there were only two types of comics: new and old. Every 10 years, there was a different classification. In those days an old comic was one from the 1930s and '40s, and a new comic was something that was just published a few years before. Some kids had come in to the field to start collecting the new stuff like *Fantastic Four* and the new *Flash* and stuff like that. But basically, collecting comic books meant collecting the old 1930-40 comic books, wherever you could find them. That's what my partner and I did, that's what almost everybo-

dy did at this convention...Where you purchased new comics when I was growing up is interesting. It was in the heyday of the candy stores, which you and I know very well. For the record, they were stores that sold nickel candy bars. They sold soda in a cooler with ice in it. They sold fountain soda. They sold stationery, school notebooks, and they sold a wall of comic books. You could go in there and browse a long time, read a lot of comic books before you actually had to buy one. They cost a dime and it was a time when a dime was a meaningful amount of money. We were not poor, but for radio premiums—another similar object—my mother would not give me a quarter to send for something because she had given me a quarter for something the previous month.

EISNER: You could still get a subway ride for a nickel.

SEULING: Yeah, I'm talking about when I was a kid—1944 or thereabouts. In the 1960s, we still had this candy store on almost every block. You couldn't walk four blocks without encountering them. Every candy store sold comic books. A newspaper truck would drive up and once a week, he would have comic books. You'd put 'em on the racks, sell them and next week they'd take them back and put out new ones. Newspapers every day, comic books once a week. You couldn't order what comic books you wanted. And if you were a candy store owner, how would you know the difference, anyway? *Superman*, is that the guy in the cape? No, that's *Batman*. He didn't know and he didn't care. All the comic books sold approximately, evenly well. They were a novelty. They still were in the '60s, as they had been in the '30s and '40s. The only time

PHIL SEULING addresses the 1971 Comic Art Convention at the Statler-Hilton, New York.

comic books had really taken off was when American youth *en masse* had gone overseas, and were looking for everything possible to remind them of the United States. During World War II, many millions of comic books were shipped over to the PXs. In the '50s, comics took a terrible nosedive. At this time both companies, Marvel and DC, came up with new characters, or old characters in new guises, but they hadn't caught on because by now you only could buy comics in a dwindling number of places. There was a new group growing up and developing their own likes and dislikes. In 1964 I think the world was ripe for a comics convention.

EISNER: Was Bernie Bubnis, to your knowledge, the first guy to hold a convention?

SEULING: Absolutely, no question about it. There were a few people after who tried to take credit. "Some guys came over to my house once to count...", but the first one was in the Union Meeting Hall on 14th St. and Broadway , in Union Square. Tom Gill came and did a chalk talk on how to draw comic books. It was a sensation. The following year, someone, not Bubnis, took it to the Broadway Central Hotel, and in '66 there were two because there was a bit of confusion as to who was going to run it. In '67 there was one. That made a total of five. In '68, I said, "Hell, why are we doing this on such a small scale? Let's get some people here from Oshkosh, Peoria and Podunk." We ran it at the Statler-Hilton Hotel and called it the International Convention. We drew 300 people and we were only expecting 100. The next convention drew 700, the next 1200. The following year, I think it was 1800 and nobody knew where it would end. In '72 and '73, we drew 6500 both times. Then things changed, because by now comic book stores had grown and nobody had to come to a convention.

EISNER: So by '72-'73, conventions are well established and the comic book stores are beginning to proliferate. They became a factor in the distribution and availability of comics. I want to expand on this.

SEULING: A friend of mine in the '60s owned a little candy store so I got an inside view of distribution there. Tony Fibbio was his name, a lovely guy, passed away. He collected and he knew what kids wanted, but he couldn't get the books he wanted. The distributors would not give him the titles. They said, "you're down for five." He said, "Well, change the numbers; put down 50 or 100." They said, "No, we do that only every six months." He also had to take books even though he couldn't sell a single one. He had to take 10, return all 10. That was the system. Everybody knew there were flaws. If you wanted *Superman* or *Spiderman*, why couldn't you get 'em in a store that sold comics? Why, if 100 people wanted them, should only the first five be able to get them? Lots of problems. The publishers knew. How come everybody is clamoring for these things and we have to print fewer? This was working in my mind and, of course, in everyone else's mind. Through the conventions—this all ties in—I got to know the various people with the comic book publishing companies, and I was still pretty much of a kid myself. I was in my 20s. I asked these people why they didn't sell the books directly to the stores. Why do you have to sell them through a distributor? They said the distributor serves a purpose. He knows how to disseminate books. Publishers don't have warehouses, etc., etc. We have to do it on a return basis. Why? Because that's the way it's done. Why was it done that way? Because you can't sell newspapers any other way and comic books are an offshoot of newspapers. They never were considered anything else. Therefore, the way comic books are sold is the way newspapers are sold. You sell the corner newsstand 100 newspapers even though he can only sell 20. Because the day there is a big event—a Beirut or a Grenada—you're going to sell a hundred newspapers. On the days that you sell them all, you're OK. On the other days, you take returns and they get pulped. Comic books, the same thing, although there wasn't any logical reason for it. I said and repeated it, there is another way of doing this. You could sell them directly and not even take returns. That was considered so far out, so ludicrous, that it was greeted with laughter, a friendly pat on the back. "Well, we tolerate fools and imbeciles. They're God's chosen people, so we don't say to you what we really should." But comic books started doing so badly that by 1973 I was called into the offices when I was up on one of my not very frequent visits to. . .

EISNER: Whose offices? Marvel or DC?

SEULING: Carmine Infantino's, at that time the president of DC. He asked if I still believed that I could sell comics on a no-return basis. Yes, I knew I could. "Well, how many do you think you can

sell?" I had no answers. I had no preparation for this other than my constant badgering through the years. I said, "Look, I'll find out for you, but what I want to do is order the comic books from you on the basis of the order I get from people. I'll collect the money from them, I'll hand the money to you, minus what I keep for myself. If I don't make $1000 a month out of it, well then it is something I can't do, because then I can't give up my teaching for it." It isn't worth pursuing if it doesn't make that much money. Then came the hard part. I had to tell people that all you have to do is send me money for a month, maybe even two months, and then you will start receiving comics. You had to pay for them up front and on my word, you would get those comics. On my word alone—but it was the word of Phil Seuling. And here, very immodestly I tell you, that that's a name people knew from the conventions, from my collecting, from my selling. They knew my name.

EISNER: These people, were they comic book buyers or sellers, retailers?

SEULING: They were buyers, sellers, people who went to flea markets, people who had magazine or general or convenience stores or newsstands, who wanted comics because they understood the business. Later, these stores would become less convenience stores and more comics. Later still, they would become popular culture stores where they sold comics, movie magazines, posters and stuff like that. But, in those days they were just all people with different ideas. Maybe a rare person would have an idea that he could run a store that sold only comic books. Usually it was people that wanted to supplement something they already had going. And I think every adult in those early days had another job. Nobody made his money on comics. Nobody.

EISNER: But the retailer, and this is a significant difference, knew and understood the medium.

SEULING: Yes, he could talk about it. A new breed of cat.

EISNER: I was selling newspapers as a kid, and I also lived off the newsstands when I was publishing. When I went to distributors' conventions, I knew I was talking to guys that didn't understand what the hell they were dealing with. They did not care. It was just paper they were shoving back and forth.

SEULING: They'd take the money, but but they didn't like the idea that there were so many titles. I mean, there was only one *Times*...

EISNER: Well, the reason for their concern was that the comic books in a store invited browsing. A lot of kids would clutter up the store and cut down on the traffic.

SEULING: But kids with dimes in their their hands, nevertheless.

EISNER: So you talked to Carmine Infantino and Sol Harrison and you started to explore the possibility of selling direct. You were an agent.

SEULING: No, a middle man. I was an independent contractor. [Sea Gate Distributors, Inc.] was not acting for DC or Marvel. I was buying outright from them. I was taking possession of the books and then if I didn't sell them, I would eat them. I was a jobber, but I was hedging by taking the orders first. If I added up my orders for a book and it came to 2500, I'd order 2500. I lived in an apartment at the time. Where would I have put any extra books? I didn't touch the books. The companies shipped the books. After the first month went very well, I went to Marvel. It was a little easier there because they knew what they were doing. They said, "DC is doing this, OK, we'll do it." So I put Marvels on the list and this was the time when the collecting bug had just

1980 CONVENTION—On the market floor.

bitten the nation. It was the right time. It never went below that $1000 a month. It went way above that very fast. Jonni [Levas] started Sea Gate at exactly. . .

EISNER: How did Jonni get involved?

SEULING: Jonni and I met when I was a high school teacher and she was a student in the same school. At the time, though, we were still friends. Jonni was working in the Brooklyn Museum where we had an exhibit featuring Will Eisner.

EISNER: I remember that.

SEULING: One of the feathers in my cap. She was working in the museum and I was teaching English in high school. We ran the business out of my apartment, later out of my house. She quit her job in order to run the business. We had to get someone to help us, then another, then another. This is still in my house. Then two guys joined us because we were handling books other than comic books. In six months, life had changed considerably. Within two years, we had to move into quarters where there was room for storage and for all the things a business needs. It was thriving. It went nothing but up and it went that way for a few years.

EISNER: So now you had a structured wholesale business and you were still operating with Marvel and DC, who were the major suppliers on a wholesale basis.

SEULING: And adding from 10-20 new stores every month.

EISNER: How many stores were there in '73 that resembled the comic shop we see today?

SEULING: 200.

EISNER: I understand there are 3000 today. Jonni told me she had a list of 2500-3000. To me this is a remarkable phenomenon.

SEULING: I'll tell you why it is even more remarkable than just the growth. We never interfered with the independents, the newspaper dealers. They kept selling their comic books, they kept selling to their own stores. We never crossed their paths. What we had were new people, new stores, new customers, new markets, new readers of comic books. These were people who could now find what they wanted in the quantity they wanted on a regular basis.

EISNER: Can you now, in hindsight, give me a profile of this new reader that you're talking about? We have established that the comic book store operator was different from the kiosk operator; he was a man who enjoyed reading the books, could discuss them, knew the characters and loved the medium. Now let's talk about the comic book buyer.

SEULING: If you could let me beat around the bush for a second, I don't believe there was ever a comic book reader who wasn't a comic book collector, whether he took that book home and kept it and read it a second and third time, or whether he gave it to a friend who traded him one of his comics. Or whether he sold it on the streets for a nickel. What ever the reason, I think kids held on to comics. That was one of those things that they possessed, like bubble gum cards, which were for keeping or holding. There were very few kids who would put in more than a dime a book into their collection. Now they wanted, if this was *Spiderman* No. 72, where was 71, 70, 59, 40 and then they found out that there were people who sold these things. Gradually there was sort of an awakening to the fact that there were other readers out there. The letters columns in the books told them that. Yes, there were antecedents because even *Spiderman* and *Superman* talked about what they looked like in the old days. There was more to life than just hanging on to the most recent issues. They started talking in other languages that were really inappropriate. For instance, they took the coin collector's word "mint" and made it their own. Comic books are not minted, they're printed. But, they took "mint" to mean a fine copy. The collecting grew as the stores made it possible for kids to collect. Collectors with-

© 1972 Sergio Aragones

ered where there were no stores—how long could you pursue futility? The more stores there were, the easier it was to collect; the more titles you could collect, the more thorough you could be. So every store that started, whether it wanted to or not, aided its rivals. They created long-lasting comic book fans. Pretty soon there was a network. These kids met outside the stores to trade books where the store owner wouldn't be involved. They communicated in the letters columns. I even heard of places that had comic book clubs where half a dozen kids would contribute and work it out so "you buy these two, you buy these two," so they could have 12 comic books a month to read. That kind of thing. They became tenacious. There was always a "number one" on the stands in those days, and they could all latch on to the new favorite. They would meet at conventions. Now conventions came into it. Six or seven years after New York, there were conventions in their town, in Chicago, San Diego, San Francisco, Atlanta, in St. Louis, in this place and another place. With conventions and comic book stores, kids could find out that there were other people that spoke the same language. Now you could say Clark Kent's real name is Kal-el, and people would not look at you as if you were a pinhead.

EISNER: So that trivia became part of their cultural sport. That brings us full circle. Was there a typical profile? As I said earlier, when I grew up everybody who edited comics decided that comic book readers were 10-year-old cretins in Kansas City.

SEULING: They told me that the kids were in at 10, out at 13. The new readers I think started much younger. Roy Thomas was inspired to write comics at age 9.

EISNER: All right, so they start younger. Do they last longer?

SEULING: Yes. The comics were a part of their childhood that kept giving pleasure, so they read them on into college. Now Marvel, especially, very prestige conscious, wants it to be known that comic books are for college kids. They're not. They could not survive seven days on the sales they make in college areas. However, it is true that some of those kids that start in junior high continue reading through college. Those are the true collectors. Then sometimes they come back five or 10 years later when they're 25 or 30.

EISNER: What about the educational levels of these readers? Are they any different than the educational or emotional level of. . .

SEULING: What you said at the very beginning is that comics were a sign of low literacy. I agree.

EISNER: Well, I said they were perceived to be a sign of being a "dope." When one wanted to show, in a movie, a guy that was dumb, he was sitting there reading a. . .

SEULING: William Bendix reading a comic book.

EISNER: Yes, William Bendix reading a comic book. That image brought a laugh. An adult comic book reader from Brooklyn. It was tantamount to being a big dope.

SEULING: Where does that leave me? I'm from Brooklyn and I read comic books.

EISNER: So am I from Brooklyn and I *make* them. Seriously though, this image is especially important to anyone "making" comics, because I'm not a collector. I'm always concerned with who I'm writing for, who I'm talking to. Did you perceive an audience that was looking for different material than the old *Batman, Superman* and so on?

SEULING: Yes, absolutely. However, we were told over and over again, at conventions, we distributors, we who were not directly part of the old line business, were told that fans don't matter. If fans didn't buy comic books, nobody would notice it, the numbers wouldn't show up. They don't affect comic book sales.

EISNER: As late as 1973, '74, the common wisdom was fans were all right, but they don't really count? In the main sales bulk, right?

SEULING: "Wisdom" goes in quotes. The "wisdom" of fools. Right. What happened was simply by numbers. The fans bought what they wanted. Titles soared. They went through the roof. I think those were the days when *Spiderman* was the hottest issue. . .

EISNER: Well, that was when Stan Lee developed a kind of connection with the "college market." He produced the. . .

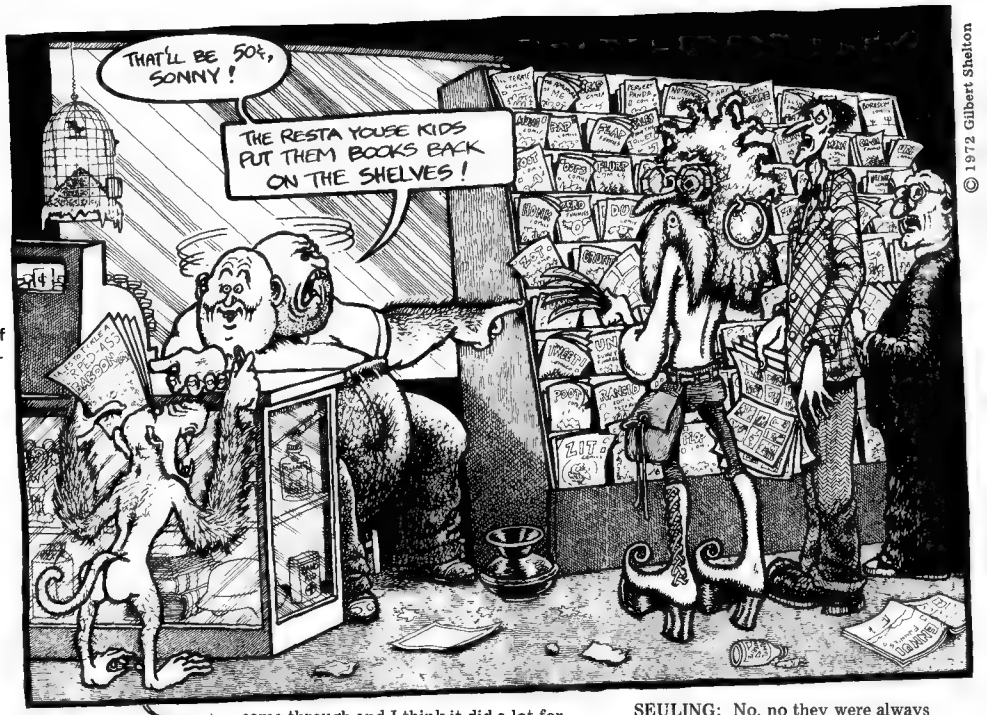
SEULING: . . .Pseudo-intellectual market [chuckle]. Grant Stan Lee that he sounded his market and fed it properly. I can't go along with a lot of the propaganda that it was for adults, the Einsteins, the future Nobel Prize winners of the world. No, no, this just isn't true. The mass market was still the 10-year-olds that kept plunking down 12 cents for a comic book. But, they started being heard through their numbers. Writers and artists began saying, "Well, that's just what the fans want, why do we have to do that?" They started being corrected. "Now wait a minute, these are the books that are selling and paying your salary, not the others."

EISNER: What about the "underground market?" The underground comics that came about in the late '60s, the Crumbs, the San Francisco output of comics. Did they come into the scene at all?

SEULING: Well, I'll count on you to edit this with extreme care. I don't use the term "underground" the way other people do. Underground to me, in movies, art, in anything, it simply means not available through normal channels. We were the undergrounds of the day. So were the undergrounds that dealt in drugs, death and revolution.

EISNER: Yeah, the early undergrounds began in head shops.

SEULING: No question about that. They were undergrounds. But my way of distributing comic books was also an underground way. It was a natural marriage there, and yes, we did distribute undergrounds. They moved very well through the market, especially the good ones. It was always my pride to say that the fans in my particular market, and here's a more direct answer to your previous question, they selected the best. They bought Shelton, Foolbert Sturgeon, they bought Crumb, you know what I'm talking about. They bought the really fine stuff. The guy who had a sense of the world. They left behind the trash, the stuff that was, "Hey, watch how many ways I can draw human genitals." The fans were selective and showed what they knew and what they preferred. Their aesthetic sense




**CONCEPTIONS of the comics buyer—While some saw them as 10-year-olds from Kansas City, others saw them differently. At right, Gilbert Shelton's view from the underground. At bottom, the R. Crumb character, "Nutsboy."**

came through and I think it did a lot for undergrounds. Look who the big successes were. Were they not the best ones? Obviously, Crumb dips his pen into your subconscious and puts it right on the page there for you to see. Gilbert Shelton, Foolbert Sturgeon, these are a few of my favorite things. *The New Adventures of Jesus* [by Sturgeon], I brought that to my most religious friends as an underground that is not religious, but deals with religion and that they can laugh at. It's extraordinary.

EISNER: Well, now the undergrounds are displayed in shops along with, and kind of mixed in with, the Marvel and DC. Were they mixed in then?

SEULING: No, no they were always separate. Many stores would never handle undergrounds under any circumstances. I felt as a distributor that I should handle everything, but listen, I had my run-ins with the police. They were not above saying things that were not true and made accusations against me that landed me in the klink for one night.

EISNER: Oh, an ex-con, eh?

SEULING: I paid my dues. Listen, you can laugh about it in retrospect, but at the time it was quite serious. It endangered my lifetime profession, my family welfare, people who worked for me. It made me completely cut back, completely. I continued to sell what I had, but reorders for new material were almost nothing. They had come up with a new definition for pornography, that it had to be based on a local perception of "community standards," and at that time, they did not know that "local" at least meant "statewide," which is the current perception. Every locality felt, "Ha ha, now we have victims." You couldn't take the chance. Very few people could. That was when they stopped publishing undergrounds at 20-50 titles per month. Now it's down to very few things.

EISNER: Well, there probably is a literary reason for that, having to do with the audience. I think the combination has created a kind of ground level perception on the part of the reader. I think there was something else to it, a social or socio-cultural revolution going on at the time, and what they had to say, they had to say. Part of it was even a sexual revolution, with the freedom. . .

SEULING: Now we're in a repression and the cutting down of head shops by saying that you can't sell drug paraphernalia, because it might be used for drugs, and those drugs might be illegal. You've got a three-step process there of why things are illegal. Well, you can't sell undergrounds to head shops, because there are no head shops, because the shops might sell paraphernalia, and the paraphernalia might be used...and so on.

EISNER: Yeah, there aren't that many undergrounds, but the market is adequate now, so a Gilbert Shelton or a Robert Crumb or an Art Spiegelman, who I don't necessarily lump together, have a marketplace for their work. They don't have to worry about it.

SEULING: It would be lovely if it were true. There will be a time when you can count on, oh, 2000 stores around the country that will take on new titles.

EISNER: Do I understand you to say that the 3000 stores will not take a certain type of comic?

SEULING: Well, certainly. There are a couple that will not take title that deal with excessive sex or violence from even the major companies.

EISNER: I thought it was kind of a free and open market.

SEULING: No. There is a censorship by purchase power.

EISNER: That's certainly allowable.

SEULING: But you hate to see it. You'd like to see everything offered to everybody, and have the purchaser make his own decision. I do, on the other hand, understand when a guy says, "The kids are coming in, half of them are accompanied by their parents or grandparents, and I don't want them to see these books in the store."

EISNER: That's acceptable. As a school teacher, you're probably very sensitive to cultural deprivation, which is a result of this kind of censorship.

SEULING: I was straightened out early on that. I taught in a school in Harlem and I pointed out to a teacher once, I said, "Naomi, the kid in the back is reading love magazines." And Naomi said, "But that kid is *reading.*" That shook me up, oh yes.

EISNER: I was into this in the '50s and '60s when I was selling on that basis to schools. I said, "Look, you may not like comics but your students will read them!" This is what they ultimately found out. There was a great prejudice, in the pedagogical world, against comics. There just always was. Let's get back to the impact of the market's growth on the product. I still maintain that the marketplace makes the product and the product makes the marketplace. It's a chicken and egg situation.

SEULING: There are so many things that are dependent on other things. For instance, if I sound like I'm taking credit for all of this because I devised a certain way of doing business, then that's coming across wrong. [But] if the publishers no longer had to print 500,000 books in order to sell 200,000—all they had to print was 200,000—with the saved money could they then not make a better product? Could they then not give the artist higher royalties? Could they then not give back the artist's art work? I believe the new style of distribution made much of this possible.

EISNER: Well, I don't believe it happened that way. It wasn't the result of a cessation of greed. Greed is never satisfied. If one is making a 200% profit, he's not about to say "I'm satisfied, I'm going to give up 50% of it and only make 100%" Changes happened because they were forced. I perceive that the publishers began providing identification and royalties and better deals to artists because artists were beginning to be marketed on the basis of their names. In 1940, and as late as the 1950s, comic books weren't sold on the basis of the reputation of the artist doing them. They were bought because of the story and visuals. They bought *Spiderman* because he was *Spiderman.* Even in the daily strips, where the identification of the artist was more critical, Captain [Joseph] Patterson was apparently willing to let Milton Caniff go on the grounds that he thought he could get somebody else to do *Terry and the Pirates* just as well. Maybe that's something that's not entirely true, because I don't know what was in Captain Patterson's mind. But for the comic book field, what you did, the growth of the convention and store systems, the growth of that whole marketplace, had the effect of creating an identity for artists. They became the stars almost as much as the property itself. That's what I think is happening now. I think your conventions are the fountainhead of that.

SEULING: The convention system is where the stars were made.

EISNER: So there were 500 Lou Fine fans and suddenly anything Lou Fine did was important. I'm just using the late Lou Fine as an example. Recently, Marvel saw *Thor* experience an enormous burst of sales simply because they changed the artist. The new artist happened to be very popular, and this had to have an effect on sales. Publishers now tend to sell the artist's reputation. This is closer to book publishing. The enormity of this change, Phil, has to be measured against the fact that publishers, beginning with *Superman,* assumed that they owned a developing property. The guy who did it didn't matter. It was a property whether Siegel & Shuster did it, or somebody else did it. Often after a few years, they'd change artists without destruction of the property. What I'm trying to get at is that the 'cons' started something in motion that was above the immediate marketing problems. In the long range, it has had an effect on the art form itself and has an effect on the status of the artist. Artists today, for the first time, are more than unknown talent.

SEULING: Whatever the reasons for it, I'll be glad to take credit if you want to give it to me. But the real reason is that the change in readership went from the mass unselective public to the few who were able to discern. Those few were able to discern between the good artist and the lesser artist, between the artist whose dynamism made the character go, and the ones whose lack of it made the characters stultified.

EISNER: It's the selectivity of the fans. We were talking earlier about what is happening to distribution today and the power of large firms which dominate the field while surrounded by very small and hopefully rising publishers. I'm not too worried about those two dinosaurs because while, yes, they are going to make a lot of difficulty, in the end, the buying public, the fans, have got to be satisfied. Readers are laying down $1.50 or $2 for a comic book today. Astronomical! Sixty cent comics look like junk, and people don't want to buy the 60-80 cent comics anymore.

SEULING: Well, there's kind of a reaction setting in there. People are reading books that they haven't read before. They're turning away from the very expensive books. I think when comic books get past $1.50 to the cute $1.95 or $2 price, $2.50, $6.95, if they're going to ask those prices, kids are going to say, "Well, let's see if I can survive without reading them, and in the meantime, I'll buy six 60 cent comics." I think the cheaper comics and the books put out by the lesser publishers are going to have a great chance here. There is sales resistance to expen-

**BULL MARKET**—Is it a case of fools and their money soon parting? Let the buyer beware.

sive books building now, first from the distributors, then from the retailers, and trickling down to the fans. The people who have to fork out the most money at one crack are the distributors. When they realize that they owe a bill of $30-40,000 for one title, all of a sudden the resistance begins. When the retailer realizes that the time has come to pay a bill—"yes, you've had your fun with *Ronin* or the Marvel Graphic novel, but now please send us $2700 for your month's pick of that crop"—he starts feeling resistance. Then the kid begins to realize that he spent $4 and only got two comic books. Slowly, this is beginning to happen. Nobody overorders anymore. I'd rather underorder as a distributor.

EISNER: But, you're able to meet your bills and be liquid.

SEULING: That's crucial. The publishers have made the situation. You know, Will, we talk about ages in comics, "Golden Age," "Silver Age." I think we're going to have to call the 1980s the Age of Greed. This is where people are grabbing everything they can.

EISNER: Well, I don't know, greed has always been around. The distributors, wholesalers, publishers and the artists themselves have always been greedy.

SEULING: So ruthlessly so, so completely without regard for tomorrow?

EISNER: Let me ask you, is the artist who delivers what he knows inside is a piece of junk, turns in three or four pages of talking heads, just to get his price per page, is he being less greedy and less diabolical than the publisher who tries to buy it and own it outright?

SEULING: No. It's all down the line, Will. At the time that *Superman* was bought by DC, I'm sure somebody said that maybe it will be valuable down the line. . .

EISNER: No, they bought all the rights because they felt they had a perfect right to own a property they could continue on with indefinitely. The creators' equity was not a major consideration.

SEULING: Yes, but they didn't have anything specifically in mind. What I'm saying is, these people were doing the most they could to make a go of it, both the publishers and the distributors. Now. . .

EISNER: You mean there was no concerted trade conspiracy?

SEULING: Now I believe there is malice of forethought. "How much can we get for this book?" Not, "Here's the cost, plus the profit margin added on." The first answer might be $2.50. The second answer might be $1.50. But the book goes out at $2.50. They have a captive audience and the audience, so far, has not fought back. For instance, let me pick a magazine, *Playboy*. I don't even know what the price is anymore. Let's say they come out with a $2 issue and all the other magazines are $1.50. They can say, "Well, our quality says we're going to do it for that extra 50 cents," or, "Damn it, we better get in line or else zillions of people are going to be buying other magazines." The competition is in the field. There is *no* real competition within the comics field. If Marvel wants to set a comic book up at $3 that cost them 15 cents, who are they competing with? There is no similar title that DC puts out. If the buyers buy it, then let the suckers have it for $3.

EISNER: Well, that's supply and demand.

SEULING: A feeling of resentment has started.

EISNER: Does your sympathy go to the buyer?

SEULING: You can't give too much sympathy to the. . .

EISNER: . . .Guy who has $3 in his hand and he has a choice. . .

SEULING: . . .And he acts like a fool. "A fool and his money are soon parted."

EISNER: I don't call him a fool.

SEULING: I think in many cases he might be.

LIKE THE SHRINERS OR THE AMALGAMATED PIPEFITTERS, ORGANIZED COMIC BOOK FANS HOLD CONVENTIONS ACROSS THE LAND... THESE DEVOTEES ARE USUALLY ENGROSSED IN DISCUSSIONS OVER RENDERING STYLES..
YEH.. BUT CAN YOUR AVERAGE PHILIPINE ARTIST DRAW REALISTIC EXPLOSIONS?
OH, SURE!! BUT THEY'RE EVEN BETTER AT SWEAT DROPS!
STAR TREK
© 1977 Bill Griffith

EVEN FURTHER GONE IS THE COMIC BOOK HORRDER WHO HASN'T READ A SINGLE TITLE HE OWNS.. HIS OBSESSION IS WITH COMPLETED SETS AND PROTECTING HIS NEWSPRINT TREASURES FROM INEVITABLE YELLOWING.
A MINT CONDITION MIGHTY MOUSE IN 3-D...
A MUST-HAVE, DOUBLE-BAG ITEM !!

**FANS, CRITICS, COLLECTORS– Bill Griffith observes the latter two, probably at a convention. At right, Kirk Alyn, who played Superman and Blackhawk in movie serials, talks to fans at the 1971 New York con.**

EISNER: He opens this book and sees a lot of provocative pictures, a lot of sexy stuff, and he wants to own it. Or, he or she loves art work and here's a book filled with Berni Wrightson pen and ink art, absolutely dazzling.

SEULING: And he thinks he can sell it for $6 a year from now.

EISNER: An investment, you mean. Somebody told me that there's an enormous amount of investment buying today, even among the younger kids. It's going to be a very sad day when everybody comes out of the woodwork and tries to sell a lot of old stuff and nobody wants it.

SEULING: *Ronin No. 1*, everybody in the world ordered huge quantities of that because it's a Frank Miller book and it was going to be very valuable. So many copies were ordered that right now when *Ronin* is up to No. 4, how many copies of No. 1 do you want? I'll *give* you all you want. Everybody is stuck.

EISNER: Reminds me of one of those old Wall Street jokes about selling a stock...

SEULING: To who??

EISNER: Right. I'm trying to trace this to the product itself. What does this kind of marketplace do to the product itself? Are you predicting that junk is finally going to be turned out? To turn out a 60 cent comic book, you have to turn out maybe 150,000 copies on newsprint.

SEULING: I'd like to see the field split more. I'd like to see quality comics for a little more money continue to sell. I'd also like to see a return to crudeness in writing, art, printing and get the books out there as cheaply as possible. I think it's a kind of enjoyment that kids want and like. They are not sophisticated enough for the complications of galactic internicine warfare with gods from a previous timespan. [Will chuckles]. I read a story in a very old Marvel comic where the Human Torch chased bank robbers with no super powers whatsoever. Bank robbers for 48 pages. I read it with interest. Why did there have to be laser beams, transporter rays, why that level of sophistication? Why not just tell a good story?

EISNER: I'm all in favor of telling a good story, but you shake me up! This is a stunning statement. Everybody just gives lip service to quality of package.

SEULING: I want a return to crudity. When you look at the early *Captain America*, for instance, there was Jack Kirby at his most exuberant. There was Captain America socking a guy so hard the guy nearly fell out of the panel. And Captain America took such a lunge at the guy that his leg bent back. That's great. I knew it wasn't realistic, but who in the hell wanted realism? I wanted comic books. It's my personal gut feeling that comic books should go back. I recently read *Judge Dredd*. *Judge Dredd* is a series of stories, each one of which has the simplicity in drawing style and storytelling of the old *Captain Marvel* stories. Now they were basic. These guys didn't have to do a lot of work on their technique and their shading and their zipatones. No, here was Billy Batson walking past a picket fence, nothing else, because nothing else was necessary.

EISNER: *Judge Dredd* is filled with all kinds of powerful art, from what I've seen; fantastic line art. But it's pretty frightening stuff.

SEULING: Yeah, but it's a simple story. There's a Judge Death, who wants to kill everybody. How do you kill Death? Otto Binder used to write for Marvel. It's a simple little twist of an abstraction and you follow it in picture form. You follow the cuneiforms until you understand that there's an ending and Death itself has been killed. Yes, wonderful, and they did it in 48 pages. I love it!

EISNER: What is the state of the convention today? Do you see them growing, thriving, dying?

SEULING: In this "Age of Greed," everybody is trying to run 13 conventions where one used to be run, and I think that's why conventions now, despite what the managers say, they usually draw about 1000-2000 people, as many as 3000. But when you hear some convention drew 15,000 ask them to show you where the people were. You'll laugh.

EISNER: Do conventions still have a valid function?

SEULING: I don't know, because it's pretty much like the revolution has been won, the objectives have been attained. What do you go to a convention for? Conventions have never drawn people who want to go to them as they do museums: "Here's an old comic strip, here's an old piece of artwork, here's an old artist." It's never been that way, really. The convention now has a DC panel on what's coming, a Marvel panel on what's coming next year. That's what people go for. I don't think you even need that anymore, since the companies are putting out their own specialty notice magazines.

EISNER: The trade journals like *Buyer's Guide* and *Comics Journal* provide plenty of news.

SEULING: So I don't know what needs conventions fill right now. I would say "auld lang syne" is the best thing. You've gone to conventions before, you want to go again. The marketplace, the idea that you can buy things there that you can't usually buy other places is still true to a limited extent. Dealers will save their best stuff for the big conventions because they know there'll be a lot of people there. Of course, no dealer can tote his whole store to a convention, so you're just getting a sampling. What the fan gets at a convention is the intensity of peers, colleagues, friends. He's going to be the boss there. He gets a chance to meet cartoonists and other people. At the end of every panel or talk or slide show, there's a question and answer session. It never used to be that way. It used to be, at the end of a banquet, there would be a few people who would raise their hands and get their questions answered. Now it's, this is the artist, and another artist, and another, and now we'll take questions from you.

EISNER: How many conventions are there in the country?

SEULING: There's a big one in Chicago, in San Diego and in New York.

EISNER: Wasn't there something that

said there were three conventions going on every month?

SEULING: Oh yeah, there's maybe 30 conventions. I guess they're convenience store-type conventions. If your city is too small to have a big convention, we'll bring our convention to your city and you can give us your money. I don't think they serve a hell of a great purpose. I'd like to see that change. I'd like to see, for instance, exhibits going from convention to convention. Why aren't there speakers who travel to conventions? Why aren't there artists who prepare slide talks? The only one who ever did that was Russ Myers with *Broomhilda*. I invited him to be aguest, he was pleased, and I asked him to take some slides. He said he already had plenty. Well, he must have had about 100 slides. That's not a lot. The talk lasted about an hour and he told us about the studio "where I hide when I don't want to work." He did that kind of thing, quick little gags, and the fans got such a feeling of being in on the drawing of that strip, seeing it created, here in his house. Wendy and Richard Pini have done this at my request, and talks like that can be interesting. An interview, such as we're doing. . .

EISNER: Well, this is more of a Shop Talk. I want to exchange ideas about the field with you.

SEULING: But at a convention, although you and I would be amused, what would the audience be doing? Probably catching up on those free comic books they've been given at the door. There should be something going on for the eye and ear at the same time. That's my idea of conventions. I've been trying to make them that way for the last couple of years.

EISNER: So they can still have a place! You're not saying that in five years, we're not going to see any conventions.

SEULING: No, no. Nobody who ever runs a convention knows that. . .This is silly, but if you've never run a convention, you believe that it's a great way to make money. Actually, it's a break-even thing. The way you make out is: a) prestige; b) you push the name of your store; c) you might make money if you sell stuff. Those are the possibilities, but the convention itself is not a real money-maker for the person who runs it. That is, unless you charge $10 at the door, and that's a gouge.

EISNER: Besides the one we attended together in Italy, you've attended European conventions at Angouleme, Bastille, Prado and Lucca. How do they compare with American conventions?

SEULING: Oh, I think poorly. I listened with fascination to some of the things being discussed. However, they don't charge admission. Anybody who wants to can wander through off the streets and see what these nuts are up to, and wander out again. Then they say they had 10,000 people at their convention. If I did that, I'd have 500,000 here in New York. You want to get interested people. The people at my convention want to take part. They want to talk, buy, write, get autographs. In Italy, this is not true. It is really for, oh, a publisher: "Oh, I didn't meet you before. You're a writer? Oh, that's fine." And they both write each other's address down in their notebooks. I'm not against it. I think there's room for both kinds. My conventions have always been both kinds, in as much as they have the single, solitary social event for a comic book professional. The cocktail party.

EISNER: Yes, the cocktail party. I've been to them; they're great! It's very noisy, but there's a chance to meet a lot of people that I'd never get to see otherwise. A comic book artist usually spends alot of his life under a light on the drawing board. He has to, it's the nature of the work.

SEULING: San Diego gathers artists together. They do the same thing and fulfill a social function also, but that's not the primary purpose. It it wasn't for the dealer's table, they'd fold also.

EISNER: So you feel that the convention should be expanded to be a show for the fans?

SEULING: I don't know. I'm split. What do you think? Should it be a fan-oriented collection of attractions, or should it be something intellectual, or should it be a marketplace?

EISNER: Well, I have a prejudice. I'd like to see an element for the professionals to come and have an exchange. There isn't enough of an intellectual exchange. Comics artists traditionally never had a gathering place. That's why the National Cartoonists Society began. It really began as a Marching and Chowder Society. The early members resisted being an intellectual sort of professional society. In our field, I would like to have an exchange from time to time, almost a symposium, if you will. I would like to see that as part of a convention.

SEULING: On the few occasions that I have tried this, I have said, "I want this year's convention to be both fan convention and professional meeting." I've sent letters and pamphlets to this effect. Know what they say? "Tell me about it when I get back from my vacation." Marvel, DC, all the comic book companies officially and individually say "Phil, when you start running it on a business day, I'll be there." That's it.

EISNER: In other words, they're in attendance to meet and greet fans and sell comic books. That's all they want.

SEULING: The idea of a meeting of the artists, of making it a show to their mutual advantage, to exchange ideas, to see what other publishers are doing, to display merchandise—"No," they say, "I'm not giving up my weekend for that."

EISNER: Artists traditionally have tended to be suspicious of each other because of a sense of competition. There's this nagging feeling that if a publisher doesn't buy your stuff, he is going to buy your competitor's stuff. Artists loathe to share ideas. I've always found artists hesitant to tell me what they're working on now in detail. It's almost as though they just don't want to talk about an idea. It

might get stolen.

SEULING: There's also a snob value involved here. New York and San Diego are two places that can attract artists, because that's where a lot of artists live. Now if I wanted them to come to Montreal or Atlanta for a trade show, you could understand their reluctance, but they're not even going to stay in Manhattan an extra weekend for it. Go to Frankfort, Bologna, Angouleme, "Oh, my God, of course I'll go there." That has some snob appeal. "I've been to Europe."

EISNER: So what we're saying is the convention system has a future, but probably more on the pragmatic or audience-oriented level.

SEULING: I see conventions continuing on a much reduced basis. I think the convention that can be run on 1000 people is going to be the successful one. You expect 1000; your break even is based on that. I think if you run a giant convention and try to draw 6000, you're not going to make it.

EISNER: Because the audience consists of young collectors and those who are curious about meeting other collectors.

SEULING: I've been to other kinds of shows, Will. There's a poster show, a national poster show, that's beautiful. You should see the people, how quiet they are, how nice they are, how they look at the posters, how the dealers will go through 100 posters even if they know the person is just browsing. Different kind of audience, different kind of dealer. I've been to a toy show down at Kennedy Airport. You can't get there unless you have a car, so you don't have the usual rowdy street element. It's a nice select group and they wouldn't dare touch the toys unless the exhibitors said it was all right. Conventions, for the most part, are in the middle of cities and they have to draw everybody they possibly can, because they work on numbers. And we're getting a free-spirited crowd. I don't object to them. I like them, but it's not the same as the poster or toy show crowd. Maybe we should have a show at Kennedy where the median age would be 28.

EISNER: I don't know. As I'm sitting here talking with you, you're turning my mind around. Well, if I had a choice between an intellectual or symposium-type meeting for the good of my profession, or one to which the fans came, then obviously the answer is fans. I have to think like Marvel or DC. The marketplace is terribly important to the product. We're still in a place halfway between the pure literary field where you're writing works to enrich the world, and the business field of satisfying a marketplace, a readership.

SEULING: One of my ideas was that the fan show would be Saturday and Sunday, and the trade show would be Friday. Nobody but the professionals would be invited on Friday, and the professionals would put up booths. There would be a booth from each company that had something to exhibit. But they say, "How do I make money on this?" If you tell them that they don't necessarily make immediate money, they say, "Oh...well..."

EISNER: Well, then what they have to do is think about how they can make it financially viable. Just to recap, we've been exploring the impact of conventions on the creative, productive side of the field, the art side. To summarize—and you haven't been arguing with me, so I gather you agree—the existence over the last 10-12 years of the convention system and the structured alternate or direct sales market has helped move a so-called comic subculture field into something in which a professional can earn a living. You've helped provide a marketplace which has an effect on the product created for it.

SEULING: I have warm memories of the conventions. Simon and Kirby met after some years at a convention of mine, and decided to work together again. What they produced, *The Green Team*, was pretty bad, but they *did* get together. C.C. Beck came to a convention and DC was just announcing the return of *Captain Marvel* and C.C. Beck started working at DC because of my convention.

EISNER: Well, I came back into the field because of you. I remember you calling me in New London where I was sitting there as chairman of the board of Croft Publishing Co. My secretary said, "There's a Mr. Seuling on the phone and he's talking about a comics convention. What is that?" She said, "I didn't know you were a cartoonist, Mr. Eisner." "Oh, yes, " I said, "Secretly, I'm a closet cartoonist." I came down and was stunned at the existence of a whole world. That's where I met Denis Kitchen. This was a world that I had left, and I found it very exciting, very stimulating. That, plus a number of incidents that occurred got me back. So you are responsible.

SEULING: Well, it's always my pleasure to sponsor new, young talent.

EISNER: [Laughter] I'll remember that, Phil Seuling, and thanks.

# LETTERS

## 'LIFE FORCE' UPLIFTING

I read the letters section of the second issue of *Will Eisner's Quarterly* first, probably because my ad was opposite. I found myself in general agreement that the first instalment of "Life Force" was a little on the depressing side, as are so many "naturalistic" works depicting a "slice of life."

But after reading issue no. 2's contents, I felt quite the opposite. It was *good* to see reason win over insanity ("The Enchanted Prince"). It was *good* to see the gangster fail in his attempt to ambush Shaftsbury (though this was made ambiguous, and could have been accidental). Most of all, it was uplifting to see Shaftsbury choose life over death, and decide to do something about his empty, shattered life.

So many people complain that Eisner should go back to doing *Spirit* stories. I guess they are made so insensitive by all the empty sensationalism of so many comics and other works of different media. If they would only look beneath the surface, they would find in Shaftsbury's decision a heroism every bit as great as the *Spirit's*.

Unlike many of today's writers, Eisner seems to believe that a person's destiny is in his own hands. Therefore, it is not the hard times the character faces here that is relevant—it is what the character chooses to do about it. For this reason, the work in *Will Eisner's Quarterly* no. 2 is fuel for my soul. Thanks, Will.

Rodney Schroeter
Box 6038,
Minot ND 58701

## LESSON TO SMITHSONIAN?

The *Spirit* magazine is fine. Whether the story is newly-colored or oldly-colored really makes no difference to me. The newly-colored stories are richer and sharper, but you've got the method of bringing up the oldly-colored ones in an outstanding way. You could give lessons to the Smithsonian.

I find it interesting that some people are taking the time to write to you and predict the demise of either *The Spirit* or *Will Eisner's Quarterly*. Their reasons seem to revolve around your having either too much new material or too many reprints, or not enough of the two. You obviously can't please everyone, but why does someone bother to write you to say he doubts you'll make it?

There is something I miss in the new format. That is the Lou Fine stories. Do you have some good ones that you could fit in somewhere?

Fred Vigiant
30 Gaynos Dr.,
Fairfield CT 06432

## WANTS CLASSIFIEDS

You should be commended for the comics, books and magazines you produce. Your *Spirit* comic is something I always look forward to even though I have read lots of the stories. The color in the last couple of issues has been just right.

Is there a chance of the classified ads coming back in either the comic book or in *Will Eisner's Quarterly*? They were a great help for my collection.

Chris Bors
121 Texas Lane,
Ithaca NY 14850

CHRIS: We think the idea of a classified ad section is a good one. We are resurrecting the section in Will Eisner's Quarterly. We are offering a FREE classified ad to anyone as long as the ad 1) is 25 words or less, and 2) is related to the purchase or sale of Will Eisner- material. —D.K.

## DISAGREES WITH DALEY

With the second issue of *Will Eisner's Quarterly*, my already high appreciation of and admiration for Eisner's new work is affirmed and increased. Because of this, I wish to register my disagreement with virtually every point expressed in Tony Daley's letter published last issue.

I look forward to future episodes of "A Life Force," and a very long run of the *Quarterly*.

Noel Byrne
330 W. Sierra Ave.,
Cotati, Calif. 94928

## NEEDED PERIODICAL

*Will Eisner's Quarterly* No.1 was well worth the wait. Jam full of great stuff. Being Jewish helped me relate to "A Life Force." I've had to explain a few terms to non-Jewish friends, but they still appreciate the tale. This is a wonderful journal/comic and I wish you much success. I'm really glad there are enough Eisner fans to warrant such a needed periodical.

Peter Glass
1895 Pioneer Way,
Fairbanks, Alaska, 99701

## C.C. BECK COMMENTS

Just a belated note: I thought the Eisner-Beck interview *(Spirit Magazine* No. 41) was well transcribed and edited. It's the first taped interview of myself that didn't make me come across as an illiterate bumbler. Some of the young people today have only the faintest conception of spelling and grammar and take their copy directly off the tape without punctuation or editing. Whoever transcribed and edited our tape knew better.

Many thanks!

C. C. Beck
1515 NW 7 Pl.,
Gainesville FL 32603

## PLEASANT SURPRISE

. . .Since *A Contract With God* is one of my favorite books, it should be no surprise that I loved the first three chapters of "A Life Force."

The color section was excellent—the color and reproduction was nicely done.

I enjoyed the "Shop Talk" with Neal Adams, much to my surprise. Why? Because I have never really seen what all the fandom fuss was about Neal Adams' art and writing. But everyone has peculiaritites, and I'm well aware I'm in a minority in not caring that much for the Adams work I have seen. I felt the "Shop Talk" was overly long, but I decided when I bought this magazine that the "Shop Talks" and articles would be icing on the cake; the new work by Will and the *Spirit* reprint would be worth the cost.

I hope that you will be able to publish this magazine more often than quarterly.

Jerry Edwards
1812 NW 103rd St., Vancouver WA 98665

## RETAILER OF THE ISSUE

Hullo from Schaumburg's Moondog's Comics! I've enclosed some black and white snapshots of our "*Spirit* Section," which is in the front window of our shop.

If you use this, you might want to note that I once wrote to Will Eisner asking if he had any art that I might purchase, to use in a fanzine I was helping with. He sent back a Xerox of the "rough" cover for the all-Ebony issue, along with a one-

time printing rights contract for $2.

Talk about a "contract with (a) god!"

Chris Ecker, Manager
MOONDOG COMICS, 1403 W. Schaumberg
Schaumberg, IL 60194

CHRIS: Thanks for the photos and letter. If any retailer has a special SPIRIT section in his or her shop, we'll be glad to throw a spotlight on it. Simply send us a black & white photo and some information about your shop. —D.K.

## DEFINITION OF AN ARTIST

I guess I'm different from some people in that I don't buy this magazine primarily for the *Spirit* reprint. The early *Spi-*

*rits* are of historical interest, but for true *Spirit* enjoyment, I prefer the postwar version, and this I can find in ample quantity at reasonable price in your well-produced *Spirit* color mag.

For me, the highlight of the mag is Will Eisner's new work, currently "A Life Force." I notice that it came under a certain amount of criticism in no. 2's lettercol, but I still find it an admirable effort. O sure, it's not perfect (what is?) and, truth to tell, I still prefer those postwar *Spirits.* Mainly, the fault I find with "ALF" is that it tends to be rather overblown and stagey. However, Eisner is one of the few people doing comics about "ordinary people." In much of his recent work, Eisner has concentrated on one area and time period and thus I can only conclude that he is trying to work out something about his past or his perceptions of it. And that is, after all, one definition of an artist—someone trying to come to terms with his life. What makes it worth reading is the quality of the artistic vision, not the story's setting or action per se.

"Shop Talk" reads just like a transcript of a couple of friends (who haven't seen each other in a while) talking over old times. And this is its main drawback. It is sort of like listening to two people talking about people you may have heard of, but you aren't acquainted with. Yet no one fills in the details during the conversation. I guess what I'm saying is that the feature would be more enjoyable and useful if more care was taken to inform the reader (either in the talk or in a sidebar) of some of the necessary background. However, even in its present state, it's still generally a worthwhile exercise.

T. M. Maple
Box 1272, Station B
Weston, ONT M9L2R9

## LIKES THINGS AS THEY ARE

I purchased *Will Eisner's Quarterly* No. 2 and enjoyed it very much (I also like the comic book). The "Shop Talk" between you and Gill Fox about Lou Fine was excellent. More on you, Mr. Eisner, Lou Fine, Gill Fox and greats of the 1940s. I grew up on this work!

Keep the large size on "Quarterly." The color on the *Spirit* story was great. I felt like I had an old comic in mint condition in my hand.

I liked everything in this magazine, and if you keep up the good work as it is right now, I will buy every issue.

Ralph Muccie No address given

## BOOKS ON FINE, FOX

I found the Eisner-Fox discussion on Lou Fine very interesting, as was the entire issue of *Will Eisner's Quarterly* No. 2.

I was surprised that Fox did not mention the book that I did about him in 1979. Fox and I also collaborated on a Lou Fine book at the same time.

The Fine book was a very short print run, and for some strange reason, it never moved. It was discontinued almost immediately.

The discussion method that Eisner is using as an alternative to the interview is an excellent idea. I hope this method proves successful, as it's just as informative as an autobiography.

Al Dellinges
P.O. Box 34158,
San Francisco CA 94134

AL: A belated thank you and acknowledgment for the books on Gil Fox and Lou Fine. We used some illustrations from these in the "Shop Talk." Readers interested in these books should contact Al directly.

## LIKES 'EIS'

Your new magazine has potential! The whole book had a "worthy" feature about it. I'm glad to see "comics" used like this. A highly emotional feature, "A Life Force," was, on the whole, fantastic. I like it because Eis is not so concerned with panels and storytelling (he's so great, it comes naturally), or action. Just emotion, and everyday events. It's great! When Jacob talks to the roach, I mean. . .astounding!

The color section was great. This is the stuff everyone talks about. I liked the Powell art, also. I don't think there's another artist that has done as many pages as Powell has, and so good!

The reason I bought this issue was Eisner's chat with Adams. There's about 400 published interviews with Adams, but this one stands alone. His advertising art shows Adams at his best. He's a better ad artist than comic artist because he's so straightforward. I'd like to see Eis talk to Heath, Nostrand and others—almost any interview would be good with Eis in it.

Andy Brown
7618 Feliciana, Spring TX 77379

## A STATE OF MIND

I realize that although I am 16 and you're much older, I do not consider you an "old man." You've been working in comics longer than almost anyone else, but you still create remarkable work—your newest is also your best. You have that spirit or vitality of youth in your work—a quality lacking in the work of many younger comic artists.

I know all your work—writing and drawing—comes from inside of you. But how much can one person have within himself? I don't know the answer, but in your case, this work seems to spout endlessly and keeps getting better. I've read "Izzy the Cockroach and the Meaning of Life" and cannot wait for what comes next.

Constantine Markopoulos
87 VanSchouck Ave., Albany NY 12209

Dear Constantine: Your fine and very flattering comments are enormously encouraging, particularly from someone of your youth and sensitivity. "Age," as someone once said, "is a state of mind." —Will Eisner

**Send your comments to: Spirit Letters, No.2 Swamp Road, Princeton, Wisconsin 54968.**

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**ORIGINAL SPIRIT sections. Over 25 in stock, plus 25 more Spirit comics. Send for free list. Dave Weaver. 17 East Mellon Street, Hampton VA 23663.**

**KITCHEN UNDERGROUND Spirit No. 1. Will trade my extra for a copy of u-g No.2 in no worse than fine condition. Also looking for Gamut No.2 and Comic Media No.11. Send S.A.S.E. for details on u-g Spirit. Chris Bors, 121 Texas lane, Ithaca NY 14850.**

**1966 NY Herald Tribune with new Spirit story, mint Harvey Spirits, P*S magazines, back issue Warren Spirits, signed portfolio plates, posters, deluxe foreign editions and much more available. Send S.A.S.E. for "Eisner Archive List." Hollybrook Graphics, Rt.1 Box 329, Princeton WI 54968.**

## EISNER ITEMS WANTED

**SPIRIT BAGS No.1-4, Undergrounds 1-2, Harvey 1-2, any condition. Erik Andresen, 738 E. Palmaire, Phoenix AZ 85020.**

**WARREN SPIRITs No. 1-16, The City Portfolio, Eisner self-portrait button, Spirit poster. Contact Goran Stenberg, Hagau. 69, 781 53 Borlange, Sweden.**

**SPIRIT MAGAZINE No.18, 20, 21 needed. Write Vince Waldron, 2048 North Burling, Chicago IL 60614.**

**WARREN SPIRIT No.14 & 15, Kitchen Spirit No.17 & 20. Al Kracalik, 10475 Ethel Court, Apt. 2-W, Rosemont IL 60018.**

**KITCHEN SPIRIT No.18 wanted. What do you want? I will pay! Must have! Herb Metzler c/o Practical Theatre Co., 703 Howard, Evanston IL 60201.**

**HARDCOVER "ART of Will Eisner." 2 copies wanted. Please write if you will sell yours. Anders Lilja, Vattenvagen 16, S-56200 Norrahammar, Sweden.**

Mail to: W.E.Q. Want Ads
2 Swamp Road, Princeton WI 54968

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**--JIM SHOOTER**

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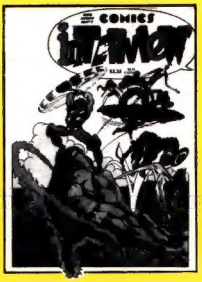
**I want to work for Marvel. We're talking about doing a SILVER SURFER maxi-series.**

**"I think I've seen a UFO and a gnome. You can put that in your interview and smoke it."**
**--STEVE ENGELHART**
**COYOTE writer/creator**

**The American public perceives comics as moron literature--which they are, for the most part. In comics, there's enormous enthusiasm for crap."**
**--GARY GROTH & KIM THOMPSON**
**COMICS JOURNAL & AMAZING HEROES**
**editors/publishers**

**Batman is as psychotic as the criminals he chases -- maybe more psychotic. I want to get across in GRENDEL that good and evil are sometimes indistinguishable."**
**--MATT WAGNER**
**MAGE writer/artist**

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